

OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
REVELATION

OF

JESUS CHRIST to ST. JOHN.

Which comprehend the most approved SENTIMENTS of the celebrated Mr. MEDE, Mr. LOWMAN, BISHOP NEWTON, and other noted Writers on this Book ; and cast much additional Light on the more obscure Prophecies ; especially those which point out the Time of

The RISE and FALL of ANTICHRIST.

IN TWO PARTS.

CONTAINING,

PART I.

General OBSERVATIONS on PROPHECY.

The FORM, ORDER, and STYLE of the REVELATION.

The MONITORY VISION.

PART II.

The PROPHECIC VISIONS ; which are distinguished into FIVE PROPHECIES, each of which is subdivided into several SCENES.

BY SAMUEL LANGDON, D. D.

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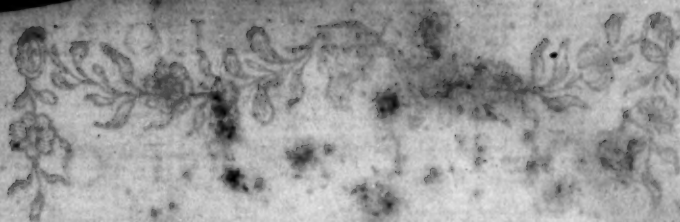
BLESSED IS HE THAT READETH, AND THEY THAT HEAR THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY, AND KEEP THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN THEREIN, FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND.

REV. Chap. I. Verse 3.

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

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18. The following are the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various committees of the Board of Directors:

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The Church labored under Persecutions; The
Overthrow of Idolatry; And the general Estab-
lishment of Christianity under Constantine and
his Successors.

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Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, having received the book, begins to open the seals, and proceeds until six are opened. At the opening of these covers different hieroglyphics appeared. Four of them contained the pictures of horses with their riders; some of a very portentous and terrible appearance: The fifth shewed the souls of martyrs, earnestly praying that their blood might be avenged: And the opening of the sixth gives a view of the terrors of the end of the world.

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C O N T E N T S.

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C O N T E N T S.

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OBSERVATIONS
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OF
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PART I.

SECTION I.

General OBSERVATIONS on PROPHECY.



NOTWITHSTANDING the limited capacities of man, and his more immediate concern with present objects, it is frequently necessary for the direction of our conduct, that we should know some things beforehand, in order to guard against foreseen evils, and secure life and its enjoyments. It is the part of Wisdom and Prudence to consider causes and effects with attention; to observe the prospects which open before us; and to judge of important events while yet at a distance. Without

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this kind of prescience we could form no regular designs in life, and should be perpetually exposed to disappointments and dangers.

In the great affairs of nations such sagacity is very important; since multitudes may be involved suddenly in a long train of calamities by the blind precipitation of their rulers, and the appearance of difficulties and dangers against which they have made no provision.

God never designed that man should have such prescience as to know all the shifting scenes of life before they come. This would be so far from adding to the happiness of life, that on the contrary, all enjoyments, being comprized in one invariable landscape of future events, would at once fill the mind, and be inconsistent with the pleasing succession of agreeable impressions; and all the evils of life, being brought into one aggregate view, would oppress the soul with grief and terror incessant and insupportable. Besides, this would be inconsistent with that sense of continual dependence on the supreme government of the eternal King, which is proper for all rational beings, and more especially for man in a state of weakness and guilt.

Yet there are great events which sometimes take place in the world, so far beyond the reach of human sagacity, but of so much importance, not only to individuals, but to nations, and especially to the church of God, that some previous intimations of them may rationally be desired and expected; as warnings to the wicked, and encouragements to the virtuous and pious; and as infallible evidences of God's providential government. Nor is this incon-

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sistent with just ideas of the sovereign authority and inscrutable counsels of the Most High. For though secret things belong to the Lord, yet at his pleasure he may communicate some of his purposes from time to time; that mankind may know there is a God who rules in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and that the righteous may repose their confidence in him.

Mankind in all ages, with one consent, have entertained the sentiment, that the Deity may reveal things secret and future by dreams, visions, voices, signs, or prophetic inspiration. This is evident by the variety of auguries and arts of divination universally practised among the heathen; by their frequent consultation of oracles, and dependence on what their priests uttered in the ravings of pretended inspiration. Therefore if the true religion, from the beginning, had been wholly destitute of all extraordinary communications from heaven, idolaters would have made this a capital objection against the worship of the one true God and gloried in the superiority of their own deities. But divine revelation fully justifies our dependence on an omniscient God, to make known things that are to come, as far as may be necessary to give a demonstration of his universal government, and manifest his favour to all that trust in him.

The scriptures of the old testament abound with instances of divine premonitions, oracles, and prophecies; foretelling remarkable events relating to persons, families, the national affairs of Israel, or extraordinary revolutions in the world.

The Mosaic dispensation was wholly founded on communications of the mind and will of God to the posterity of Abraham. They depended entirely on his care and conduct, from the time of their deliverance out of Egypt; and God encouraged their obedience with promises of many peculiar favours, and warned them of signal judgments to be brought on them if they were disobedient. The divine oracle was established among them, which they might consult on extraordinary occasions; and from thence they received plain and unequivocal answers. God also gave them a succession of prophets, who predicted many events, near at hand or more remote, mercies or judgments; by which they confirmed their mission, enforced their warnings and exhortations to repentance, and encouraged the righteous to trust in God under the greatest afflictions. But especially the characters of the expected Messiah, and the blessings to be enjoyed under his reign, were repeatedly foretold, in language more and more explicit and descriptive as the time of his appearing drew near. Such predictions so constantly preceded all remarkable providences with respect to God's chosen people, that the prophet Amos expresseth himself with great propriety when he says, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets."*

Many of the ancient predictions not only declare, in general terms, the extraordinary designs of Providence, but often mention particular circumstances, and fix with precision the times of great events. Noah had divine warning, not only that an universal deluge was coming on the world, but that it
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* Amos iii. 7.

should be at the end of one hundred and twenty years ; to which time the patience of God was limited. Abraham was notified that his posterity should be servants in a strange land, and be afflicted four hundred years ; and that God would then judge that nation, and afterwards bring them out with great substance. The duration of the captivity of Judah in Babylon, is expressly fixed by the prophet Jeremiah to seventy years. That great and good monarch Cyrus, who gave the Jews liberty to return to their own land, and rebuild Jerusalem, is mentioned by name, by the prophet Isaiah, above an hundred years before that event took place ; and with some remarkable circumstances of his taking the great city Babylon. The time for the appearance of the Messiah is very precisely determined, in Daniel's prophecy, to be at the expiration of seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, from the rebuilding of Jerusalem ; and the destruction of the city and temple by the Romans, soon after the Messiah's death, is also predicted in the same prophecy.

The fulfilment of these, and many other prophecies equally explicit and determinate, gave undeniable demonstration of the infinite knowledge and glorious perfections of the God of Israel. Therefore to these predictions God appeals for the vindication of his own unrivalled character, " I am God, and there is none else : I am God, and there is none like me ; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done ; saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will perform all my pleasure."*

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* Isai. xlvii, 9, 10.

The same kind of evidence of the divine perfection and the truth of Revelation has been continued under the New Testament. Though the christian church does not stand in need of such a succession of prophets as were sent in ancient times; yet our Lord Jesus Christ foretold his own sufferings, and the destruction of Jerusalem with the whole jewish polity. The spirit of prophecy was also given to the apostles, and some of the primitive christians, on special occasions. The coming of Antichrist, and the great apostacy of the christian church under his reign, were predicted by all the apostles, so that christians in that day were in constant expectation of those strange events. St. Paul very expressly mentions some of the principal characters of that man of sin; the manner of his introduction; and the time when he would make his appearance: That it would not be until the Roman emperors, who were an effectual bar to the appearance of such a new power, were taken out of the way; after which he would soon be revealed.* And the great corruption of morals consequent upon the reign of Antichrist, the same apostle very particularly predicts in his second epistle to Timothy: Which prophecy is also confirmed by Peter, and Jude, with some additional circumstances.†

But that christianity might have the utmost advantage of that kind of evidence which arises from the accomplishment of prophecies, the canon of the New Testament ends with this revelation made by Jesus Christ to St. John; which predicts a surprising series

* 2 Thess. ii. 3—12. 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

† 2 Tim. iii. 1—9. 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3. Jude, verses 14—19.

series of extraordinary events, relating to the church, the Roman empire, and the world at large as far as the affairs of the world have any connexion with the church. The predictions of this book are more various and extensive than any other prophecies in the sacred scriptures : They extend from the time when the apostle saw these visions, through all succeeding ages, even to the consummation of all things ; and they not only predict the most remarkable revolutions in the world, and in the state of the church, but point out with great precision, the times when some of the most important events were to commence, and their continuance. Therefore, if this prophecy can be interpreted in an easy and consistent manner, according to the natural import of the emblems and strong figures used in it ; if we are able to fix, with a good degree of certainty, on the principal events predicted, and prove their correspondence with the times particularly assigned ; we shall have striking evidence, not only that this book was written by divine inspiration, but that the whole of the christian revelation is true. The evidence will be superiour even to that of miracles ; for however Satan may deceive men with signs and lying wonders, none but God can assure us of astonishing changes and revolutions to take place in distant ages of the world, far beyond the sagacity of the human mind, or of any creature. When miracles have ceased for a long time, the impressions of that kind of evidence grow weaker continually : But when one prophecy after another is fulfilled, at the very time when the events were to be expected, and agreeably to the natural order ; when the series still goes on, and new evidence is presented from
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more recent facts ; when this is repeated from time to time until the whole plan of divine Providence is finished ; this is a continued testimony to mankind that the God of heaven reveals his secrets, and we have the firmest grounds of faith in his word.

Upon this consideration, this prophetic book of the New Testament demands the highest veneration and attention. Instead of neglecting it as unintelligible and useless, we ought, with serious and earnest application of mind, to inquire what are the great things which God has been pleased to make known to his church : That as our knowledge of this revelation increases, we may find our faith in the gospel strengthened, and our hope encouraged, and be able to silence the cavils of infidelity.

S E C T I O N II.

Of the DESIGN, FORM, and STYLE of the REVELATION.

THE general design of this revelation is the same with that of the principal prophecies of the Old Testament, viz. to admonish the church of its declensions and corruptions ; to reclaim men from their sins, and warn them of approaching judgments, and to comfort the people of God, and encourage their faith and patience under the severest trials, by giving them assurance that God will support his own cause against all adversaries—deliver his church in due time from persecutions and sufferings, and manifest the wisdom and righteousness of his government, in the final issue of things, by
punishing

punishing the enemies of his gospel with utter destruction, and exalting his servants to a state of perfect and everlasting felicity. In whatever obscurities this prophecy, from the very nature of it, is involved, this general design is plain to christians of ordinary capacities ; and they may read it with this great advantage, of having all the passions of the soul roused and warmed, as to general truths, by the force of the strongest paintings of language, though they may be ignorant of the meaning of many particulars.

But the more special design of this book is to represent the progress of the gospel from the beginning ; the enmity of Satan against it ; and his continual attempts to destroy the church : While God, from time to time, by his special favour, preserves a remnant of faithful worshippers, and finally conquers all the adversaries of the gospel, establishes his kingdom over all nations, and prepares the way for the introduction of heavenly felicity.

The form of the revelation is peculiar. As it is a representation of things in visions, it agrees with the manner in which revelations were made to the prophets in ancient times ; and there is a remarkable agreement between this and the prophecies of Daniel relating to the latter days, not only as to the manner of the revelation, but the matter likewise. St. John has a more particular vision of that fourth great beast which Daniel saw ; and of the ten horns ; and of that little horn or blasphemous power which sprang up among them, which is plainly the Antichrist, or St. John's second beast. Both Daniel and St. John exactly agree as to the duration

tion of this last power, viz. a time, times, and an half; both behold this blasphemous beast slain, and his body given to the burning flame; both have a vision of the universal kingdom of Christ upon earth; and the prophecies of both extend to the end of the world. But the revelation made to St. John has these distinguishing characters; that there is not so intricate a mixture of events, near and remote, as in the visions of Daniel and the other prophets; that the order of them is not so often interrupted; and that the emblems and enigmatical language are not involved in so deep obscurity, but are capable of an easier interpretation, by due attention to the principal design and series of the visions, the natural signification of the emblems, and the figures frequently used by the ancient prophets.

It is obvious that this book is divided into several distinct parts, and that the particular visions in each part proceed in a regular manner; the former preparing the way for those which succeed; until the representation of things belonging to the same division is completed. Yet the order is not so strictly continued from one part to another, that the next series of events always begins precisely where the former ends: For when a new view of things is introduced, some circumstances which could not with propriety be represented in the preceding, though belonging to the same period of time, are exhibited, in order to render the new scene more intelligible and complete. Therefore it is not necessary that we should so closely connect the visions, as to suppose the events of the latter always come on after those of the former, without interruption.

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By inattention to this observation, Mr. Lowman, whose valuable labors have greatly illustrated this prophecy, has been betrayed into some great mistakes.

These visions are not to be considered as exactly similar to common dreams; in which the fancy often joins together things in their nature very incoherent, and observes very little regularity; yet there is so far a similarity, that things are painted on the mind in lively images. Supernatural dreams, such as Joseph's, Pharaoh's, Nebuchadnezzar's, and the like, are emblematical; and upon the supposition that the same emblems uniformly signify the same events, the skill of interpreting dreams among the ancient Pagans was founded. But their interpretations did not always proceed according to the most natural ideas suggested by the images: They rather collected together a number of events which followed upon particular dreams; and so expected the same events from the same impressions on the imagination. Therefore to depend on such rules of interpretation as they have delivered, will be of little advantage for the interpretation of this revelation. By too great dependence on them, the learned and pious Mr. Mede, whose Key to the Apocalypse has been so serviceable to the church in opening many of the mysteries of this book, was led into some erroneous interpretations.

As this revelation was made chiefly by pictures on the mind; and yet is a prediction of a long series of events, with a variety of circumstances; it bears great resemblance to the hieroglyphical manner of writing, and is to be interpreted by the same rules.

rules. And as it has several principal divisions, or distinct prophecies, each of which is again subdivided into particular visions, presenting separate pictures of persons, actions, or things, like the scenes of a drama ; it may with propriety be considered as a dramatic prophecy, written in hieroglyphics ; the greater divisions being the different acts, and the subdivisions the several scenes.

Mr. Lowman well observes, that the book itself leads us to a general division of it into two parts ; the first, containing *the things which are* ; the second, *things which shall be hereafter* :* The former, is an admonition and encouragement to the seven churches of Asia, and also to all churches in succeeding ages : The latter contains the prophecies of events which were future ; some nearer which should in a short time come to pass, in the proper sense of the expression in the beginning of the book ; and some more remote extending to succeeding ages ; yet surely to be accomplished in proper time, and therefore often represented as near, or present.

The ancient prophets were sent to reprove, warn, instruct and encourage the church of God, as well as to foretel the designs of Providence : Therefore this revelation begins with admonitions and encouragements to the seven churches, adapted to their several characters, to which all churches are required to hearken. This makes the first or monitory part of the prophecy, and may be considered only as an introduction to the visions which reveal future events.

That part which contains the predictions will be found, on an attentive view of the whole, to have
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* Rev. i. 1, 19. Chap. iv. i.

several remarkable pauses, where the order of the images appears to be shifted, and a new series begins : Each of these may be considered as distinct acts of the sacred drama, or so many distinct prophecies, subdivided into particular scenes. The number of these acts, or distinct prophecies is five.

The first prophecy begins at the fourth chapter, and reaches to the end of the seventh ; comprehending the remarkable providences relating to the idolatrous Roman empire, while the church suffered great persecutions ; the overthrow of idolatrous worship ; and the peaceful establishment of christianity under Constantine and his successors. These events are represented by the opening of six of the seals of the book.

The second prophecy begins at the eighth chapter and is continued to the end of the eleventh. It contains predictions of great judgments to be brought on the world by the destruction of the civil empire of Rome, the rise of Mahomet, the armies of Saracens, and the power of the Turks ; together with the profanation of the church during the reign of Antichrist ; the testimony of the witnesses in sackcloth all that time, and their final triumph ; and the utter destruction of the antichristian tyranny and introduction of the kingdom of Christ. These events are predicted by the opening of the seventh seal, and the sounding of seven trumpets, the particular vision of the profanation of the church being interposed.

The third prophecy begins at the twelfth chapter, and reaches to the end of the fourteenth. This exhibits a view of the church of God as labouring to propagate the gospel, persecuted by a dragon, and flying into the wilderness ; describes the Roman empire

pire under its seven forms of government, by a monstrous beast with seven heads ; shews the rise of Antichrist as the second beast, or the last active blasphemous head of that empire ; and then gives a very general view of the judgments by which this impious and tyrannical power will be destroyed.

The fourth prophecy is contained in five chapters, beginning with the fifteenth. After representing the saints as anticipating their final victory over the beast in a triumphant song, it shews the particular judgments to be brought on the kingdom of the beast, in a long series by seven angels sent to pour out seven vials of the wrath of God ; the last of which completely overthrows the great city Babylon, *i. e.* Rome. Then follows a particular description of this city and church, under the emblem of an harlot richly adorned, and riding on the monstrous beast described in the thirteenth chapter, an explanation of which is given by an angel. After this a most pathetic lamentation is made over the city by all the kings and people of the earth ; and then Christ with the armies of his Saints appears, going forth against the beast and his armies, and by a decisive battle conquers and utterly destroys them.

The fifth prophecy is comprehended in the three last chapters. It gives a view of the kingdom of Christ prevailing in the world, Satan being bound for a thousand years ; the great corruption of the world after that period, and the attempts of multitudes of wicked men to extirpate the church ; the general judgment ; and the complete felicity of the heavenly world.

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From the nature of prophecy, and the visionary manner in which this revelation was communicated, the style must necessarily abound in the boldest figures of language, proper to paint all the surprising images in the most vivid colors; and be adapted to the various incidents by which they are introduced and connected: The metaphors must rise to the height of imagination; and the diction must often be enigmatical. Yet the language so remarkably corresponds with that of the ancient prophets, and the images are so generally taken from them, that by recurring to similar figures used in the Old Testament, we may be led to the meaning of the metaphors and images in this book. We may also observe in this book, as in all hieroglyphical writings, some things easy to be understood intermixed with such as are more obscure, and serving as a clue to lead us through the whole. Likewise the natural order in which the images follow each other in the several divisions of the prophecy, affords farther direction in the interpretation of the book.

But whatever mysteries may remain too deep for investigation, until the full accomplishment of every vision makes the meaning of all more conspicuous; there are some general truths in christianity of the greatest importance, necessary for the support, quickening, and comfort of believers, expressed in such elevated language, and placed in such a striking view, that every common christian must take notice of them, and feel their force.

Every christian who reads this revelation, must observe the majesty and power of God; the exalted characters

acters of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his constant care of the church in its lowest and most afflicted circumstances ; the certain execution of judgment on the enemies of the gospel ; and the faithful performance of divine promises at the appointed time. The terrors of divine wrath at the last day, and a view of the consummate joy and felicity of the heavenly state, must make deep impressions on serious minds. As to these general instructions, all christians may read this prophecy with great advantage ; and blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of Christ in this book, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time of the accomplishment is at hand.

But christians of more improved understandings ought not to be discouraged from searching farther into the meaning of these prophecies because they seem mysterious ; for they were given that the church might search out their meaning from time to time, for the comfort of believers under all tribulations ; and these mysteries will be understood more and more clearly, by diligent prayerful study, and due attention to the remarkable events in providence, from age to age.

SECTION III.

The INTRODUCTORY and MONITORY VISION, contained in the THREE first CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE first thing observable in the beginning of this book, is a declaration that "It is a revelation given from God to Jesus Christ, that he might shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and that Christ sent his angel and made known these things to his servant John."

This introduction is designed to assure us of the divine authority of the revelation, and excite attention to it. If it is not from Christ, but a fictitious revelation imposed on the church by John or any other forger of lies, it is the boldest and most impious forgery that ever was published: For it assumes the highest and most authentic title which can be prefixed to a book immediately sent from God. But if, according to the Father's will, Jesus Christ really communicated this revelation to John; then it ought to be received with the greatest reverence and thankfulness; and all christians should pay earnest attention to these things, and improve them for their confirmation in faith, obedience and patience. St. John gives his testimony that this is the word of God, that Christ had given him full evidence of the truth of the revelation, and that he really saw the things which he has written: Therefore he pronounces a blessing upon him that readeth, and them that hear the words of this prophecy;

and whoever carelessly slights and neglects this book, plainly forfeits this blessing.

St. John having received this revelation, communicates it, by divine order, to the seven churches of Asia; to each of which he directs an epistle. Agreeably to the form of salutation commonly used by the apostles, he wishes them grace and peace, "from him which is, and which was, and which is to come," *i. e.* from the selfexistent everliving God, who sits upon the throne, as he appears in these visions; "and from the seven spirits which are before his throne;" by which we may understand that one holy spirit of God, given to all the churches, and manifesting his energy in the hearts of all christians; for St. John here speaks agreeably to his vision in chap. iv. verse 5, and chap. v. verse 6, "and from Jesus Christ," on whose characters he expatiates. He is "the faithful witness," on whose word we may rely with the utmost assurance of the truth; "the first begotten of the dead," who rose from the grave by his own power, and has given his people hereby the highest evidence that they also shall be raised and live with him; "and the prince of the kings of the earth," whose authority is above them all. And unto him who hath "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and his Father," he leads christians to ascribe "glory and dominion for ever and ever." Let all say, amen. And farther that we may pay the highest honors to Christ, and stand in awe of his supreme authority as Lord and Judge of the world, he warns all men of the glory and majesty in which he will shortly appear, not only by

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remarkable providences, but as the great Judge of the world. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him;" to which all true christians, with John, may cheerfully subjoin, "Even so, amen*." Christ then speaks by John, and declares his own high character as the author of this revelation, "I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending, faith the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." That it is the Lord Jesus Christ, who here speaks of himself under these peculiar characters, as one in whom the Father is manifested, appears by the eleventh verse of this chapter, compared with the thirteenth; where the Son of man, whom John saw in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, repeats the same characters, "I am alpha and omega, the first and the last." These are the characters of the Almighty on the throne, of the same import with the name I AM, by which God made himself known to Israel in Egypt; and they are claimed by the Son of God as the express image, and true and only representative of the Supreme Majesty; for he himself says to Philip, John xiv. 9, 10, 11, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father—believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?—Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me: Or else believe me for the very work's sake;" and he is called "The Image of the invisible God; the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person†."

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* Vide Dan. vii. 13. Zech. xii. 10. Matt. xxiv. 30.

† Colos. i. 15. Heb. i. 3.

St. John proceeds to mention the peculiar circumstances under which he received this revelation. In the first place he speaks of himself in terms of perfect equality with other christians, as their brother and fellow sufferer on account of the gospel : For he well knew the propensity of mankind, to entertain a superstitious veneration for persons who are believed to have an intimate correspondence with the Deity, and he desired to keep at the greatest distance from pride and ostentation on account of this revelation which he had received ; as to which he had nothing to boast of, except as a mere amanuensis, the whole honor being due to Jesus Christ the immediate author. He then goes on and says ; that he was in banishment in the isle of Patmos on account of his preaching Christ : And on the Lord's day, *i. e.* the first day of the week, which christians observe as their sabbath, consecrated to the remembrance of Christ's resurrection, he perceived himself under an extraordinary influence of the Spirit of God : In a kind of trance his senses were shut to all common objects, and his mind brought wholly under the power of the most vivid supernatural impressions. In this situation, he heard behind him a great voice, piercing like a trumpet, and some person saying in very distinct words, " I am alpha and omega, the first, and the last ; and what thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia." Upon this he turned to see the person who spake : And being turned, he saw seven golden candlesticks, *i. e.* a large golden candlestick with seven branches, like that which Moses made for the tabernacle. And in the midst of
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the candlesticks was "one like unto the Son of man," a name which the Lord Jesus Christ frequently and familiarly assumes. He appeared habited very much like the high priest, with a long garment like the robe of the ephod reaching down to his feet, and girded round him with a rich golden girdle; and he seemed as if trimming the lamps. But his form was glorious, beyond every thing which belongs to human nature in its present state, resembling that in which the Ancient of Days appeared to Daniel, and which he saw at the river Hiddekel*, and that which the disciples saw at the transfiguration of Christ. His head and hair were white and shining with the purest lustre; his eyes were as a flame of fire; his feet were like fine brass, perfectly burnished, so that they seemed as if they were sparkling and flaming in a furnace; his voice was majestic and of a most powerful sound, like the noise of the billows of the great ocean; and his countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

Jesus Christ ascended with his human body, in which the holy scriptures lead us to think he still appears in the view of angels and saints in Heaven; but so changed in its form, as to be accommodated to the glory and blessedness of that world of light and perfection; and in which he will come again to judgment at the great day: For he will come in like manner as he ascended up into Heaven. And St. Paul makes Christ's glorified body the pattern of that change which our vile bodies will undergo at the resurrection. As it was necessary that Christ should personally appear in the vision, in order to give the highest evidence that this revelation was

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* Dan. vii. 9. and chap. x. 5, 6.

not a mere creature of the imagination, but a real communication from Jesus Christ, he presents himself to view in his glorified body, and with a majestic voice declares his high character, and gives his orders to St. John.

In this appearance, innocence, mildness, piercing knowledge, glorious majesty, and irresistible power, were united. Two circumstances in this vision are peculiarly observable; viz. the seven stars held in the right hand of this glorious person; and the two edged sword proceeding out of his mouth. The seven stars which he held in his right hand were the lights burning in the seven branches of the candlestick; both which are afterwards explained; the candlestick, as representing the seven churches of Asia; the seven stars, as representing the angels, *i. e.* the chief elders or bishops of those churches. Christ is present in his faithful churches by the gracious influences of his spirit accompanying his word and ordinances; and the ministers of his churches are held in his hand, for he appoints, supports, and encourages them in their work, and keeps them under his command. The two edged sword which proceeded out of his mouth, is a symbol of the word of God, or that gospel which Christ preached and published through the world, by which he subdues his enemies, and powerfully defends his own people. The word of God is called by St. Paul the sword of the Spirit, Eph. 6. 17. and he uses the same comparison in Heb. 4. 12.

By this vision all St. John's faculties were overpowered, so that he fell down at the feet of this divine person, as a dead man. But Christ with his right hand raised him up, and encouraged him to attend

attend without fear to the things which he saw and heard : And to give him the most agreeable assurance of his character, he declared himself to be the very same person who was crucified and rose again, " I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth, and was dead, and am alive for evermore, amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death." The first and the last, are the appropriate characters of the eternal God. He that liveth, and was dead, and now lives forever, is a plain description of Jesus the son of God. And having the keys of hell and of death is a figure expressing the power of life and death committed into his hands, and his government over all things.

St. John is then commanded to write every thing which he had already seen, and the things relating to the time then present, and the things which were afterwards to be accomplished. Agreeably to this command, and under divine inspiration, he wrote the following epistles to the seven churches, which are designed to warn them against every appearance of apostasy and corruption, as preparing the way for the great apostasy of the church under the reign of Antichrist.

Some divines have considered these epistles not merely as monitory, but as properly prophetic, describing the state of the church in general, through seven distinct periods, to the end of the world. A warm imagination may give this an appearance of truth : But there is no necessity of considering this book as wholly consisting of predictions ; for admonitions and warnings made a part of all the ancient prophecies, as well as predictions of future events.

John is expressly commanded to write things which *are*, as well as things *which shall be hereafter*: Therefore as the abovementioned interpretation renders the first part of his orders insignificant, and is not founded on any conclusive reasoning, it is much more consistent with the general design to consider these epistles in a more simple view, as particularly adapted to the state of those several churches at that time; but likewise applicable to all other churches then, and to churches in all ages, under similar circumstances: For there is a general call to all that have ears, to hear what the spirit saith unto the churches.

Without remarking on all the particulars contained in these epistles, it may be observed in general, that for the greater authority, and solemnity, each of them is prefaced with some distinct part of the descriptive characters of Christ by which he manifested himself to St. John; and that the greater number of those churches retained their christian character in a very commendable degree, and therefore have the most animating encouragements given to persevere in faith, patience, and good works; but some of them are reproved for great faults, which required speedy repentance and reformation.

CHAPTER II.

THE church of EPHESUS had diligently attended to their duty, and patiently suffered great afflictions for the gospel; they had carefully guarded against impostors, who attempted to seduce them from the faith delivered by the apostles; and zealously opposed the Nicolaitans, of whose principles and practices Christ declares his abhorrence. These held, that lewdness, sacrificing to idols, and other
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evil practices were matters of indifference, which christian liberty allowed. But this church is charged with having left their first love; and is exhorted to repent, with a threatening that otherwise Christ would come quickly, in the way of providence, with just resentment, and remove their candlestick out of its place, *i. e.* take away their name from among the churches, and wholly reject them. Nevertheless, for their encouragement to maintain the spiritual warfare against all the enemies of the gospel, Christ promiseth to him that overcomes, that he will give the great privilege of eating of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God; which refers to the last prophecy of this book.

The church of SMYRNA is commended as being rich, *i. e.* in faith and works of obedience; though they had endured great afflictions, and were reduced to poverty as to the things of this world. They had especially met with great difficulty and opposition from an heretical party, who pretended to be Jews, and were not; but were a blasphemous sect, who might more properly be called the synagogue of Satan than a church. By Jews is meant christians; for the christian church is represented in this book by the jewish temple, and its worship; they who are sealed in the seventh chapter, as christians under Christ's peculiar care, are represented as taken out of the twelve tribes of Israel there particularly named: And in Paul's epistles christians are called the seed of Abraham, as having the same faith; the circumcision, as having their hearts purified; the Israel of God, as being his people in a higher sense than the natural posterity of Jacob:

Jacob : These and similar phrases are familiar to all the apostles. These pretended christians who troubled the church of Smyrna, are mentioned again in the epistle to the church of Philadelphia ; and though their particular errors are not named, yet, by the hints given, especially in the latter epistle, they seem to have been proud opinionated enthusiasts ; who had no charity for any christians but such as joined their party, and whose practices were as corrupt as their principles, so that they were a disgrace to the christian profession. This church is not reprov'd for any thing amiss ; but is forewarned of great sufferings still to come upon them. The devil, who had hitherto worried them by his idolatrous agents, would proceed farther in his rage, and cast some of them into prison, which God would permit for their trial ; and they should suffer tribulation ten days. Mr. Lowman justly observes that the number *ten* is often used in scripture indefinitely for *many*, as when Jacob says to Laban, " thou hast changed my wages ten times ;" and the same indefinite use of the word is observed by Mr. Daubuz, in several passages of Plautus. Therefore by suffering tribulation *ten days*, is meant *many days*, or a long time, so that the patience of the saints at Smyrna would have an extraordinary trial. But to fortify their minds, that they might hold out to the last, even unto death, they have this great promise, that if they were faithful unto death, Christ would reward them as conquerors with a never fading crown, the crown of eternal life : And this promise is extended to all that hear, and are finally victorious over all opposition ; they shall not " be hurt of the second death."

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The church of PERGAMOS is addressed as being seated in the midst of zealous idolaters, where Satan seemed to have fixed his seat. The utmost violence of persecution had fallen upon that church; and Antipas, a christian of great note among them, had suffered martyrdom. It is therefore mentioned, as greatly to the honor of this church, that they had persevered in the profession of Christ's name, and never been intimidated by the fury of their persecutors to renounce the gospel; and Christ declares his approbation of their fidelity to him. But some professors among them had so far apostatized from the faith in those times of persecution, that they both held, and taught, that it was lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication; using the same artifice as Balaam did, to corrupt the church, and bring down divine judgments upon it. This was a great step towards that general apostasy to idolatry which would shortly become very notorious under Antichrist; and in this they joined with the detestable principles of the Nicolaitans, of which sect there were some persons among them, of whom Christ repeatedly declares his abhorrence. This church therefore is called to repent; for they had too much winked at these corruptions of christianity, and had not taken proper care to censure and cast out such dangerous heretics. Unless they repented, Christ threatens to "come quickly and fight against them with the sword of his mouth," *i. e.* to come quickly in the course of his providence, and fight against them by all the judgments threatened in his word against such as forsake the way of truth and righteousness. But for the comfort of all who continued faithful, Christ promiseth

promiseth to give them "to eat of the hidden manna:" Which alludes to the manna with which God fed his people in the wilderness, and the application which our Savior makes of this to himself, as that true bread from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall live forever. Therefore the meaning of this promise is, that christians who fought the good fight of faith well, and came off victorious, should enjoy all that support and comfort in the spiritual life which Christ communicates to his people. To this another promise is added, and I "will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." This alludes to a custom in those ancient times, of declaring the acquittance or condemnation of persons after a capital trial, by giving a white stone to him that was acquitted; or to a custom in the olympic games, of giving a white stone with an inscription upon it, as a ticket or warrant to receive such rewards as were allotted for the victors. The general meaning of the promise, therefore, is this, that however Christ's faithful people may be reproached and condemned by the world, he will justify them now against the accusations of their enemies; give them a testimony of their justification by him, in the purity of their consciences, accompanied with such characters of the new man as will give them a name among the citizens of heaven, which, however unknown to the world, will afford great satisfaction to their own minds; and that he will acquit them in the day of judgment, with a full declaration of their character, as children of the kingdom, and entitled to the rewards of glory.

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The church of THYATIRA hath this high commendation, that they not only maintained the christian character, as to faith, love, patience, and every good work ; but increased more and more in these excellent graces and virtues, so that the last were more than the first. Nevertheless, a charge is brought against this church, " thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach, and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." Ahab's wife Jezebel instigated him to idolatry and wickedness, and was infamous for corrupting the whole nation : So there were some persons at Thyatira, who, by a pretence of being under extraordinary divine influence, and sent to instruct christians more perfectly in religion, seduced them into the indulgence of lewdness, and a participation in idolatrous feasts. And it seems, that the church, overawed by their bold pretensions, had neglected to silence and purge them out. Toward these deceivers Christ had exercised much patience, warning them to repent : But they repented not. Therefore they are threatened with judgments adapted to the nature of their crimes ; judgments so remarkable, upon them and their children, and those whom they had seduced to be their companions in wickedness, that all the churches should know that Christ searcheth the reins and hearts of men, and will give to every one according to his works. But that christians who had kept themselves from being corrupted with such doctrines, and had not known those deep mysteries, as they were called, which were not of God, but of Satan, might not be discouraged, as if they

they were indiscriminately to be punished with these emissaries of Satan ; Christ assures them that they should not be burdened with any new injunctions, or with any other afflictions than what they had already suffered for his name ; and admonishes them to maintain the same purity of doctrine and practice unto the end which had hitherto appeared among them. And as the highest encouragement to persevere and overcome all temptations, Christ promiseth to make them partners in his kingdom. As the Father hath given him power to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel ; so his faithful church should finally prevail against all its enemies, and by the gospel all opposing powers should be subdued. Christ likewise adds this promise, " I will give him the morning star : " Which is emblematical. Balaam speaks of Christ as a star which should come out of Jacob ; and in allusion to this, in the conclusion of this book, the Lord Jesus says, " I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star : " A like expression is also used by St. Peter,* when he speaks of the confirmation of the ancient prophecies, by the voice from heaven at Christ's transfiguration, and exhorts christians to take heed to this, " until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts : " Which expression means, the bright evidence of Christ's character as that star which Balaam predicted ; which, shining into their minds, would fill their hearts with joy. In Job xxxviii. 7, angels are called the morning stars. And Daniel says, † " They who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

* 2 Pet. i. 19.

† Dan. xii. 3.

ever." By considering the foregoing scriptures, we may understand this promise, "I will give him the morning star," as signifying, that Christ will give him, whose faith is victorious, the clearest discoveries of his own glorious characters, by which he shall be directed in all his walk through this world, and filled with joy in believing; that he shall shine as a light among men; and that in the future world he shall be glorified with Christ, and appear among the brighter stars in heaven.

CHAPTER III.

THE church of SARDIS was in a very declining state. They retained the profession, but had lost the spirit and vigour of christianity. They had been well instructed in the apostolic doctrine, and received it with apparent sincerity of heart; but their love and zeal were dying away. Therefore they are warned to adhere to their profession, and repent, and confirm themselves against farther apostasy, lest Christ should come suddenly, surprise them in a thoughtless state, and inflict upon them in his anger exemplary punishment. Yet, in this very decaying state of the church, when so many were defiled with the corruptions of the world, there were a few christians among them who had kept themselves pure, and retained the power of godliness. These have a promise, "that they shall walk with Christ in white;" as worthy to be numbered among his faithful servants, in this world, whose hearts and lives are pure, who rejoice in him as their Lord, are favored with his gracious presence, and are happy in the tokens of his constant care and favor; and worthy to be joined with the society

society of glorified saints in heaven, who appear as kings and priests before the throne of God, clothed in white robes of righteousness and honor. Christ declares he will acknowledge him, that is a conqueror in the spiritual conflict, before his Father and the holy angels ; among them who in the day of judgment shall be admitted into life eternal.

The church of PHILADELPHIA is praised without censure. He that hath power to open and shut, to admit or exclude from his kingdom, both in this world and that which is to come, had opened the door wide to them ; and none could shut them out from the privileges and blessings of the gospel, now or in the future world. Their profession had been from the beginning without reserve or hypocrisy : They had embraced the truth heartily and joyfully ; and continued with cheerfulness and constancy in the profession and practice of christianity, though they had but little of the wealth or power of this world, to secure them against the violence of their persecutors : And they maintained the doctrines of godliness in opposition to the boldest heretics. There were a number of persons among them like those who infested the church of Smyrna, who said they were Jews, *i. e.* as before explained, christians, and christians of superior knowledge and gifts, peculiarly filled with the spirit of God, who boldly censured all who would not join with them ; but were enthusiastic hypocrites, and bold impostors, propagating lies, and encouraging evil practices. But the church continued uncorrupted by these false christians, though treated by them with the greatest insolence. Christ therefore promiseth to humble the pride of these impostors,

impostors, and bring them down at the feet of those whom they had reviled and despised, and force them at length to acknowledge that his church was precious in his sight and under his peculiar care. A time of great trial was coming on, which should be general among the inhabitants of the earth, such persecution as would bring every professor to the test; and because the church of Philadelphia, had patiently and faithfully adhered to the gospel under all preceding afflictions, Christ gives them a promise that he will keep them in that hour of temptation, that they may not renounce their profession, or be overborne and sink under the power of persecutions. They are therefore exhorted to hold fast their profession, and continue stedfast in their obedience, that no man might take from them the glorious crown presented to view in the gospel as the reward of persevering faith: And are assured, that he who overcomes all temptations, and holds out to the end in an holy course, shall be admitted into that happy world described, at the end of this book, as a glorious city and temple coming down from God out of heaven; and have a name and a place there among the inhabitants of that new Jerusalem; and forever be united with the worshippers in the heavenly temple, as one whom Christ has marked for his own.

The epistle to the church of LAODICEA is of a different tenor from all the rest. The lifeless state of religion among them, and the awakening call to repent and return to a christian temper and practice, are expressed in very figurative language; yet conformable to the plain doctrines of scripture. They are charged with being lukewarm in religion; a

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metaphorical expression, taken from the well known offensiveness of water just warm to the human stomach, which provokes ejection. They were neither cold nor hot ; they had not entirely lost their regard to the gospel, and given up the profession of christianity ; but they were unaffected by its great doctrines, and very negligent of christian practice : They behaved as if they were quite indifferent about any thing more than retaining the name and form of a church ; and so became strangers to those graces and virtues in which the life and power of christianity consists. Such indifference in religion Christ declares to be highly offensive to him : He says, " I will spue thee out of my mouth," *i. e.* if they continued in such a state, he would entirely disown and reject them. There was a farther very unhappy and provoking circumstance which attended their case ; for notwithstanding they had nothing to boast of but the mere name of christians, they vainly imagined themselves possessed of every thing valuable in religion. They said, they were rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing ; *i. e.* they boasted of every gift, every privilege and blessing belonging to Christ's people : Yet they were destitute of all those things which are the only riches of the soul, wisdom, righteousness and holiness, and all the proper fruits of the spirit ; with respect to these, they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Nevertheless, Christ shews himself willing to exercise patience a little longer, and gives the most compassionate counsel in their miserable state, to come to him under a sense of their wants, and obtain a full supply of every thing necessary and desirable. The
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counsel is similar to that call of God in the 55th chapter of Isaiah, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: Hear, and your soul shall live: And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Christ's counsel is, "to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they might be rich, and white raiment, that they might be clothed," *i. e.* to come and take this freely. These metaphors comprehend all that enriches and adorns the soul of man, which is freely given by the mercy of God in Jesus Christ our Lord; every part of a holy temper and practice; all that righteousness which covers the guilt and shame of sin, and renders us acceptable and amiable in the sight of God; that righteousness which we obtain by Christ's obedience unto death, which is proposed in the gospel as the object of our faith, provided for the complete justification of sinners in the impartial eye of God, and a sure ground of hope to them who are humbled under a deep sense of guilt. When Christ says, "anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see," there seems to be an allusion to the cure of the man who was born blind, by anointing his eyes with clay; and it intimates, that he can easily and effectually restore the mental sight, when the soul is in a state of darkness; and that the blindness of their minds, as to divine

objects, was the true cause of their indifference in religion. After this follows a very gracious admonition to repent ; enforced by the consideration of Christ's present pity and love, and the danger of severe chastisement if they continued in their careless state : " As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous, therefore, and repent." If they had been absolutely irrecoverable, no rebukes would have been given ; but the chastisement of a child is a token of the father's love, designed for his amendment : Yet if they were not awakened to more vigor and zeal in religion, by methods of kindness and love, they might expect corrections in anger, carried to the greatest degrees of severity. This epistle is then concluded with a most affectionate declaration of Christ's readiness to visit them with all the tokens of kindness, and make them partakers of the abundant blessings of the gospel : Together with a promise of eternal glory to him that overcometh all enemies and difficulties. Christ represents himself as a benevolent and generous friend, pitying the circumstances of a poor distressed family insensible of its wretchedness ; condescending to go to the house, and there standing in the dew of the evening, and knocking for admission ; while they within delay to give him entrance, and answer him with the greatest neglect. He, nevertheless, is unwilling to leave them, and waits, and importunes them, and pleads his kind intentions ; that if they will open the door, he will come in, and bring with him plenty of the best provision, and be a guest with them at a supper which will feast their palates with all the dainties they can desire. By this similitude, the Lord Jesus illustrates his own mercy to ignorant careless

careless sinners, in a miserable state of spiritual poverty ; that he is ready to use every compassionate condescending method to gain an entrance into their hearts by his word, that they may rejoice in all the blessings of his gospel. The promise made to him that overcometh, conveys an idea of the heavenly felicity above all that ambition can aspire after in the present world : “ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne :” This, in a very strong figure, expresseth the high honor and felicity to which all persevering christians shall be exalted in the kingdom of Christ. As he, having by his sufferings completed his victory over Satan’s kingdom, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of his Father on his throne, having all things in heaven and earth put under his authority ; so his saints shall be glorified with him, and reign like kings in life eternal.

To these admonitions and encouragements, given to the seven churches of Asia, every church then, and in succeeding ages, every professor of christianity who has ears to hear, is called to attend. Human nature is the same every where, and in all ages. Men fall into like errors and vices in like situations : And former examples are instructive to those of later times. The things which were written in ancient days relating to the church of Israel, are for the instruction of christians : And whatever was blamed in the first christian churches, may be found in the churches of every age, down to the present day, though the same kind of corruptions may appear in different forms. Therefore let all christ-

ian professors learn, from these monitory epistles, what things are well pleasing to their glorious Lord, and be on their guard against all temptations to apostatise from evangelical truth and righteousness. Let them be excited to keep alive the spirit and practice of true religion, and be animated, under all labors and sufferings, to hold on in the christian course and warfare in the sure hope of glory, honor, and immortality in heaven.



The PROPHEPIC VISIONS.

PROPHECY THE FIRST,

CHAPTERS IV—VII,

Comprehends the Remarkable Events of Providence relating to the idolatrous Roman Empire, while the Church suffered repeated Persecutions ; the Overthrow of Idolatry, and the peaceful Establishment of Christianity under Constantine and his Successors. This first Prophecy has FOUR distinct SCENES or Representations of Things.

SCENE I.—CHAP. IV.

A VIEW of the THRONE of GOD in Heaven, on which he sits in glorious Majesty, surrounded with heavenly Attendants, all joining in Worship and Adoration.

HERE we have plain evidence that this vision is the beginning of the prophetic part of this book, which relates to events then future. For a door appears to St. John opened in heaven, in order to give a view of that glorious world : But because the distance of this wonderful opening was too great for him to have a clear perception of what was within, a voice, like the sound of a trumpet,

came from above, speaking to him articulately, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be *hereafter*." Immediately upon this, he was transported in the spirit, beyond these lower regions, to that opening; so that he could look through, and see into that upper world. He observed there a throne, and one sitting upon it, whose appearance was surprisingly resplendent, like the lustre of the most costly, curious, and brilliant gems, adorning the robes of some mighty monarch when he appears in all his majesty and magnificence. A rainbow encircled the throne, of a most vivid beautiful green, as if formed of one entire emerald. "Round about the throne were four and twenty seats, on which four and twenty elders were sitting, clothed in white raiment, who had on their heads crowns of gold." The grandeur of this appearance was rendered still more surprising, by continual flashes of lightning, accompanied with thunders, and articulate voices. Moreover, before the throne seven lamps of fire were burning, which are said to be the seven spirits of God. And before the throne stood a sea or laver, like the brazen sea which Solomon made for the temple; only this sea seemed like the clearest chrystal. In the midst of the circuit of the throne were four living creatures, like those which Ezekiel saw, which were full of eyes before and behind: They were of different and wonderful emblematical forms; and each of them had six wings, under which were many eyes: And these living creatures were incessantly employed, day and night, in the most exalted adorations of the holy and almighty God. Likewise, with these living

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ing creatures the four and twenty elders joined in concert, falling down before him that sat on the throne, worshipping and giving all glory to him, and casting down their crowns before him.

The design of this scene is to prepare the mind for all the following prophecies ; that they may be received with the greatest reverence, the most earnest attention, and the highest assurance of their truth ; as coming from that God whom all the heavenly hosts adore and obey, and who is able to perform without failure whatever he hath spoken. The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel had such a vision of the glorious majesty of God, when they were sent to prophecy ; that their own minds might receive the strongest impressions by the vision ; and that they might deliver their messages with greater fidelity, authority, and solemnity. And when Daniel had a revelation, in a dream, of the four great monarchies, the wonderful events under the fourth monarchy, and the kingdom of the Most High which should succeed, he saw a like appearance of the divine Majesty, and the heavenly attendants. In all these visions of the ancient prophets are many things which agree with this vision of St. John, which is a kind of transcript from them.

Whatever ingenious and pious significations some may find in almost every part of this representation of the glorious throne of God, the general intention is plain ; and many particulars of the description may be considered only as necessary finishings of the picture, to render it more uniform and complete. Therefore any critical inquiries concerning the Jasper and Sardine stone here mentioned, what were their colors, and what they signified, are of little

the importance. But the rainbow round the throne may be an allusion to the appointment of the rainbow for a sign of God's covenant with Noah and his sons ; and so intimates that God is ever mindful of his covenant with the church, and in all the dispensations of his providence, when his most awful judgments are executed upon the world, will perform his promises to his faithful people.

The four and twenty elders, sitting on so many seats round the throne, clothed in white raiment, represent the church of the Old, and that of the New Testament, united ; it has twelve patriarchs, and twelve apostles, who are now glorified in heaven, and stand in the presence of God. Their white garments are the ancient habits of priests and princes, and these, with the crowns on their heads, are symbols of purity and dignity ; and naturally suggest that they are like kings and priests before God, being purified from sin, and glorified with Christ in his kingdom.

The seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, are a resemblance of the seven lamps of the jewish temple, which were continually burning before the divine presence. This appearance is conformable to that of the seven golden candlesticks and the seven stars in the first vision. The candlesticks there signified the seven churches ; and the seven stars, the ministers who presided in those churches : But here the seven lamps are interpreted to mean the seven spirits of God. The plainer parts of scripture speak of the holy Spirit of God as one, operating by all the gifts and graces of christianity ; but here in conformity to the emblem of the candlesticks, a lamp

lamp being in each branch, mention is made of the seven spirits of God, not to signify a number, but the perfect universal influence of one and the same spirit in and through all. The one holy Spirit is given to all the churches and their ministers, to communicate light by the gospel and its ordinances, and make them effectual to promote the purity of divine worship, and the joy of all saints in the service of God. And this appearance, being in the temple of heaven, may farther signify the light, love, and joy, communicated to the church in the heavenly state, where all the spirits of just men made perfect are filled with the fulness of God, and perform his will with the purest zeal.

It is observable, that the heavenly world appears to St. John like a glorious temple, furnished in a manner similar to the jewish temple. This is evident, by the golden candlestick and its seven lamps, and the elders ministering like priests in the sanctuary : Also, by its having a sea or laver, resembling that which Solomon made. But this laver in the heavenly temple appears like chrystal, to signify that in heaven is no defilement ; all its glory is unfullied, all its worship performed without the least tinge of impurity. Likewise, there were cherubims in the jewish temple, representing angels, which stretched out their wings toward each other over the mercy seat, and looked down upon the ark ; to which St. Peter seems to allude, when, speaking of the things revealed in the gospel, he says, “ which things the angels desire to look into * : ” So in this vision, four living creatures, with wings like the cherubim, have their

* 1 Peter i. 12.

their station nearest to the throne, and lead in the worship of the enthroned Majesty.

In the vision of the divine glory which Isaiah saw*, four seraphim appeared, each of which had six wings, like these living creatures in St. John's vision, and united in the same adoration, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." Ezekiel also saw four living creatures†, which had four different faces, and each four wings. These were directed by one spirit, under the appearance of lamps; and they ran and returned, like a flash of lightning: And they were accompanied with wheels, resembling a wheel within a wheel; and all moved together, bearing on their heads the firmament and the throne of God. All this is a representation of the ministrations of the angels of heaven, who with one mind perform the will of God, and are swift to execute his orders in all parts of his universal government, rejoicing to be employed in supporting the honor of his throne. Therefore, since these four living creatures in this scene bear so great a resemblance to those which the abovementioned prophets saw, we may conclude the signification is the same; viz. that they represent the angels, as standing continually in the divine presence, ready to receive and execute the orders of his government, and giving glory to the Most High; just as the four and twenty elders represent the church. These living creatures appearing full of eyes, is an emblem of their knowledge of the works and ways of God, and vigilance in his service: Their four different faces, viz. of a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle, denote their strength, firmness, and patience, their wisdom, and

* Isaiah vi. 1, 2, 3.

† Ezekiel chap. i.

and unbounded zeal and activity in performing the works of providence committed to them ; as their six wings also shew them swift to do the will of God, and at the same time clothed with humility.

The worship of heaven is represented as continually performed before the throne by the four living creatures, &c. in concert with the four and twenty elders, who jointly ascribe all glory, honor and power to God, as infinitely holy, almighty, the great creator and proprietor of all things. This signifies that all the holy angels, and the general assembly of saints, both in heaven and earth, are delightfully employed with one consent in praising God, and enjoy the most exalted felicity in him.

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S C E N E II.—CHAP. V.

A Book appears in the Right Hand of GOD, sealed with seven Seals. Proclamation is made for some Person to come, and take the Book, and open it. None could be found worthy even to look upon it, but a Person who appeared in the midst of the Throne, like a Lamb that had been slain ; who came and took the Book out of the Hand of GOD ; At which all Heaven resounds with Joy.

WHILE St. John was looking into the temple of heaven, and observing the wonders of that glorious world, turning his eye to the throne, he saw in the right hand of him that sat upon it “ a book, written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.”

Mr. Lowman, following Grotius, supposes the pointing here ought to be altered, and that it should be read, “ written within, and on the backside sealed with seven seals ;” and finds fault with the com-

mon translation as representing, that the book was written on the backside as well as within. But this criticism must appear groundless when we consider, that although rolls, which was the form of all books in ancient times, were usually written only on one side which was rolled inward, yet sometimes, when the contents exceeded the limits of the inside, they were continued over on the back*. Of this the roll spread before Ezekiel is an instance; for it is said to be "written within and without †;" which could not be, unless the writing was continued on the backside, because it was a single roll spread open before him. But our translation is farther justified by this consideration; that if this roll which St. John saw had been single, written only within, and sealed with seven seals on the backside, all the seals must be broken at once, in order to unfold any of the contents. But as the breaking of each seal presented to St. John's view certain hieroglyphical figures, we may be sure that this roll consisted of a principal one, rolled inmost in the smallest size, which contained the most important matters, and was separately sealed; and of six others rolled over it one after another, as so many covers to the principal one, each of which had also a separate seal: And so by breaking the seals of these covers, one after the other, the contents of all were made known, before the inmost roll was opened. St. John wrote what he saw and heard at the opening of each of these rolls, and therefore the book in the right hand of God contained this very book of revelations received by the churches from this apostle.

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* *Vide* Juvenal Sat. 1. l. 5, 6.

† Ezek, 2. 10.

The design of the present scene is to give farther assurance to the church that this revelation came from God, and was communicated to St. John by that same Jesus who was crucified and rose again, agreeably to the declaration with which this book begins.

This scene represents the supreme Majesty as ready to make known many great designs of his government; not by an immediate declaration from his own mouth, but in the same manner as he created the world, by some agent worthy of the commission. Accordingly, while he holds out this sealed roll in his hand, a mighty angel with a loud voice makes this proclamation, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" But no person was found in heaven, or earth, or under the earth, any where in the whole creation, who was able to open the book, or even to look on it. With this St. John was so deeply affected, that he shed many tears. By all this we have an intimation, that the secret counsels of God cannot be known by men, or any creature, no not by the highest angels of heaven; and that they are too sacred, and too deep, to be intrusted to them in order to a full publication: And yet the church needs some information of the great designs of providence, and every christian would have great reason to weep, if no person could be found worthy to receive, and make known, such a revelation from God as is necessary for the warning and encouragement of his people. Now in the midst of his great grief, one of the Elders spoke comfortably to St. John, and informed him that there was no occasion for farther sorrow: A person was found every way equal to the
proposed

proposed design ; one who is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, had "prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." Jacob, in blessing his sons, speaks of Judah * as a lion, an old lion which none dare to rouse ; and then immediately prophesies that the Messiah should come from this tribe : And for this reason Christ is here called by the Elder, " the Lion of the tribe of Judah." And Isaiah speaks of Christ in this language, † " there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, &c. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people ; to it shall the Gentiles seek ; and his rest shall be glorious." Therefore he is here called by the Elder, the " Root of David." He is that great person of the tribe of Judah, on whom all their strength and honour depended ; by whom David was raised to the throne, and obtained the promise of a perpetual kingdom ; and in whom, as descended from David according to the flesh, this promise was fulfilled.

Immediately after this comforting information of the Elder, St. John looked and saw a person standing in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and of the Elders, who had the appearance of a lamb, which had been slain, though now alive. In his form was something very wonderful ; for he had seven horns, and seven eyes ; and the latter is interpreted as signifying the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. This description clearly points out Jesus Christ, of whom the paschal lamb, and all the lambs sacrificed under the law of Moses, were types. " He was led as a

lamb

* Gen. xlix. 9, 10.

† Isaiah xi. 1, 10.

lamb to the slaughter," as Isaiah speaks of him. Of him John the baptist says, "Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." By his precious blood christians have been redeemed, "as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot," as St. Peter speaks*. Therefore we find the emblem of a lamb familiarly and repeatedly used in these visions, to signify Jesus Christ; who died for our sins, and is risen again, and lives forever. As to the additional hieroglyphics of seven horns and seven eyes; the horns express in general his great power to defend his church, for horns are the usual emblems of power, and the number seven has particular reference to the seven churches of Asia, and is here and in many other places used indefinitely; and the seven eyes, which are said to be the seven spirits of God, signify his watchful care of the churches, his perfect knowledge of their circumstances, and the communication of all gifts and graces to all his churches through the whole world, and in all ages, by his holy Spirit; which was also signified by the seven lamps of fire in the first scene.

This worthy person comes up to the throne, and takes the book out of the hand of him that sat upon it. This intimates, that Jesus Christ speaks and makes known only what his Father gives him; as he says of himself in John xii. 49, 50, "for I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak; and I know that his commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I

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speak."

* 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

“speak.” Christ is here entrusted with the revelation of the future designs of providence.

This is followed by a plaudit of all the heavenly choirs, who with music and golden censers full of odors, in resemblance of the worship of the Jewish temple, celebrated the praises of the Lamb. The four living creatures, who represent the angels, and the four and twenty elders, who represent the church, worshipped the Lamb with humble prostration, and offered incense, which is here said to be the prayers of saints. The apostle Paul, in Heb. i. 6, referring to the 97th Psalm, says, “when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” And in the 141st Psalm, prayer is compared to incense. This prostration, therefore, with the incense offered before the Lamb, denote divine worship paid him by angels and saints. And they praised the Lamb in a new song, saying, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.” These last words express the faith of all the saints, that notwithstanding the long series of afflictions and persecutions through which the church was to pass, Christ’s kingdom would finally prevail on earth, and afterwards appear in the highest glory in heaven, where all his people will reign with him forever.

This joyful song of praise excited a general chorus in heaven. Innumerable angels joined with their four representatives and the elders, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying

saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." The whole creation then resounded with the same glorious anthem; every creature in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, every rational being in all worlds, saints still living, and those who were dead, were heard by St. John repeating the song, saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Thus according to the will of God, they honored the Son, even as they honored the Father*. To these joyful anthems, the four cherubim answered, Amen. And the four and twenty elders again fell down, and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

This representation of the honors paid in heaven to God and the Redeemer is designed to excite the same exalted devotion in christians, that they may ascribe all glory to God for his wonderful works of goodness, mercy, and power; and honor and adore Jesus Christ the Lamb of God as their Great Redeemer, who is exalted to the highest honors in heaven, and hath power to reveal his Father's will; who will make his church finally victorious over all enemies, and bring his people at last to the enjoyment of the unspeakable and everlasting blessedness of his heavenly kingdom.

* John v. 23.

S C E N E III.—C H A P. VI.

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, having received the book, begins to open the seals, and proceeds until six are opened. At the opening of these covers different hieroglyphics appeared. Four of them contained the pictures of horses with their riders ; some of a very portentous and terrible appearance ; the fifth shewed the souls of martyrs, earnestly praying that their blood might be avenged ; and the opening of the sixth, gives a view of the terrors of the end of the world.

IT is most reasonable to suppose that some natural order is observed in these visions, conformable to the order of events as far as the dramatic form will admit ; so that those next to St. John's time will be made known first ; and the more remote in their proper succession. This observation must not be extended so far, as to suppose a prophecy which follows must always necessarily begin where the foregoing ended. But as in dramatic writings, though one act or scene does not always begin precisely where the former ends, and the representations do not proceed in an uninterrupted train like plain history ; but things, transacted at the same time with those already brought to view, are introduced separately, to prepare the way for what remains : Yet a general order is observed both in the acts and scenes ; so that all lead on to the issue and conclusion. Such general order may be expected in these visions ; that where the visions are continued without interruption, in a natural order, events will succeed in the same manner ; and that those which were near at hand when the revelation was
given

given, will first be exhibited. According to this observation, the six outer rolls will open such events as are necessary to be known previous to those contained in the inner and principal roll: And the rolls will succeed each other in proper order from St. John's time. And if the events of those times remarkably agree with the hieroglyphical representations, it will be a good confirmation, that the true method of interpretation is pursued.

SEAL I.] Now when the first seal was broken, and the roll opened, there was a voice like thunder; for one of the four living creatures, or those cherubim who are the ministers of Providence to execute the will of God in all quarters of the world, spoke to St. John, and called him to come and see what the roll contained. And he looked, "and saw a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering and to conquer."

This hieroglyphic plainly represents some great general, armed with a bow, and going out to war. He has a crown given him as a prince accustomed to victory, and as one who has supreme command. His horse is white, as a symbol of dignity, righteousness, and mercy. So the different colors of the horses which follow, under the other seals, are symbols of the different designs on which they are sent. He goes out, conquering as he goes along; always sure of success in every part of his expedition; proceeding from one victory to another; and appointed to conquer even to the last, until he obtains a complete triumph, having subdued all enemies under his feet.

To apply this to Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, Constantine, or any other worldly commander, is much too low an interpretation of this hieroglyphic, and may easily be proved foreign to the design of these visions, and inconsistent with other intimations given with respect to this glorious General.

If we attend to the figures used in the beginning of the forty fifth psalm, which is a prophecy of the Messiah, we shall see a great affinity between this hieroglyphical picture, and that highly figurative language—"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, in thy glory, and in thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, meekness and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the kings enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." That Christ is the person intended by the hieroglyphic farther appears, by a very similar representation of him in the nineteenth chapter of this book. There he is again presented to view on a white horse, "going on to judge and make war in righteousness; having eyes like a flame of fire, and on his head many crowns: He is clothed with a vesture dipt in blood; and his name is there called the *Word of God*. He is accompanied with all the armies of heaven, and the war is against the beast and his armies, over whom he obtains a glorious victory." We may therefore be confident, that this mighty General is the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the hieroglyphic is designed to point out the continued progress of the gospel, from the beginning of it. Christ, by his gospel, was going out, at the time of this vision, to conquer and subdue the nations to himself. The gospel had been spreading;

spreading ; and would spread still farther, and prevail, notwithstanding all opposition and the utmost rage and malice of enemies ; and all nations finally would be subdued by it.

SEAL II.] After this, the second seal is broken, and the next roll is opened ; and another of the four ministers of Providence calls St. John to see what was in it. In this, “ a red horse appeared, and to him that sat on him power was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another ; and there was given unto him a great sword.”

These horsemen sent out on different designs, after the first, suggest the idea of a chief commander, when going to war in an enemy's country, ordering some of his general officers on particular expeditions, with proper detachments, to annoy and harass the enemy. The second horseman, therefore, is sent out with orders to embroil the enemies of the gospel, and excite them to fight with and slay one another. And by the calls to John from the living creatures or cherubim, in their turns, to come and see what was in the four rolls first opened, there is a plain intimation that the angels are made use of as the ministers of Providence, by whose invisible agency the designs of God are executed, in ways adapted to the natural course of things and the accomplishment of the divine purposes ; and that they are always waiting to do God's pleasure, and make known to Christ's servants what he commands them to communicate.

The red color of the horse is the symbol of a bloody commission ; and the orders to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another, and

the great sword given to the rider, confirm this meaning. The orders are very remarkable ; not that they should be slain by the direct hand of Providence ; but that the angels, who were to execute this commission, should take peace from the earth, so that they should *kill one another*. Mankind in general are not meant by the pronoun, *they*, as if a general war was to be excited through the world, that multitudes might be slain on all sides in fair battle among the various nations of the earth : But it refers to *them who had been the most noted enemies to the gospel*, against whom more particularly Christ was going out to war. The Jews first, and then the Romans made the most violent opposition to the gospel. They were such noted enemies, that it was unnecessary to mention them by name ; nor would it have been consistent with the intention of these visions to express these things in plain terms. They who had with one consent opposed christianity, and though formerly enemies to one another in civil matters, had lived together for some time in peace, were now to break all terms of concord, and make the most dreadful slaughter of each other.

This was fully verified by that vast effusion of blood occasioned by a rebellion of the Jews against the Romans in the reigns of the emperors Trajan and Adrian. It is not probable that the great slaughter of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem is here intended, for that event had been plainly predicted by our Savior before his crucifixion, and it would have been needless to give a new prophecy of it. And besides, it is most probable that event was past before this vision. But very soon after this book was written, in the latter end of Trajan's

jan's reign, the Jews, who were the first and most virulent enemies of the gospel, rebelled against the Romans, and massacred in Egypt and Cyprus about 460,000 of them. On the other hand, the Romans took arms against the Jews, and slew and subdued them every where. Not long after this, in the reign of Adrian, the whole jewish nation broke out in rebellion under the impostor Barcocab, and slew great numbers of the Romans ; while at the same time they also vented their malice against christians, by massacring them in all places. This gave the utmost provocation to the emperor, who sent his most experienced commanders with a large army against them ; and a very dear bought victory was at length gained, after the slaughter of great numbers of the Romans : But on the side of the Jews, the number slain in this war is said to be 580,000 ; and a thousand of their strongest cities and best towns were demolished. After which, Adrian banished all the Jews out of Judea, and prohibited any of them to come within view of that country, or so much as look toward their native city or soil. Thus the Jews and Romans, both full of the same spirit of enmity against the gospel, were by the righteous judgment of God, appointed to kill one another.

SEAL III.] At the opening of the third seal " a black horse appeared ; and his rider had a pair of balances in his hand." At the same time a voice came from the midst of the four cherubim, saying, " A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny ; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine ;" [or as our translation may be well

well corrected, *see thou do no injustice as to the oil and the wine.*]

Here the black color of the horse seems most naturally to signify, that the rider is sent to carry sorrow and affliction where he goes. The balances in his hand are a well known emblem of justice. The proclamation made, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny," and the order given, "*see thou do no injustice as to the oil and the wine,*" may most easily be understood as a prediction of great scarcity of bread, oil, and wine, three great articles of provision in Rome, which must be dealt out in an exact allowance. The Greek word translated, a *measure*, is *χοῖνιξ* [chœnix :] This was a measure in common use at that time ; and though it was of no certain standard, it is generally agreed to be the common allowance of corn for the daily provision of a labourer. Therefore as this allowance is here stated at the price of a penny, and the day wages of a labourer was also a Roman penny (*i. e.* about eight pence sterling) a man could earn no more in a day than his common allowance of wheat or barley, which are here proportioned to each other : And if, as is commonly computed, the measure contained about a quart, and the price of every quart of wheat was to be eight pence sterling, this so far exceeds the common price of this article, that it must imply an extraordinary scarcity of bread, next to an absolute famine. Bread, oil, and wine, were to be dealt out by exact weight and measure, as when men are brought to strict allowance through great scarcity. Therefore the plain interpretation of this hieroglyphic is, in the whole, that there was

to be a time of great difficulty and affliction, and yet remarkable for the administration of justice ; that men were to suffer an extraordinary scarcity of the most necessary articles for the support and comfort of life, and yet the utmost care should be taken that all might be supplied with a just share of all that could be procured.

This very clearly points out to us the times of the two Antonines, emperors of Rome, one surnamed the Pious, the other the Philosopher. They were famous above all the other emperors for their virtuous characters, and mild and just administration of government ; and happy would the world be if all kings would follow the example of their virtues. Yet the church, even under the mild, wise, and just government of these emperors, was in a very afflicted state. Paganism was the established religion of the empire ; and when religion is intimately blended with the state, the introduction of any new religion will give an alarm to the government, because if new ideas of religion prevail, they will militate with the principles of such a mixed constitution, and endanger the disturbance or overthrow of the whole. Upon this consideration some of the best Roman emperors, whose principal aim was to make their subjects happy, enforced the old edicts against the christians, and even issued new ones. Trajan persecuted them chiefly for this reason, viz. because the laws of the empire were against them, as appears by his letter to Pliny on this subject. And the Antonines proceeded on the same principles in their persecutions : Urged on the more indeed by their own superstition, and the constant clamors of zealous Pagans ; who misrepresented christians as selfwilled,

selfwilled, turbulent persons, meeting together for wicked and treasonable purposes, and not fit to be tolerated. Of these persecutions under the mildest emperors, notice is perhaps given to the church by this appearance of a black horse ; though the distresses of the empire are also signified.

As to the scarcity of provisions in these reigns, and until the reign of Severus, it may be abundantly proved from the testimony of many good historians, which Mr. Lowman has collected. Antoninus Pius found it necessary to supply the city of Rome with corn, wine, and oil, out of his own treasury, in order to suppress the insurrections of the populace. In the reign of Antoninus Philosophus, Aurelius Victor, a Roman historian, mentions great earthquakes, inundations, epidemical diseases, and the destruction of fields by locusts, as very distinguishing calamities of these times ; and adds, that there was nothing with which mortals can be afflicted but what raged in that reign. Famine was among the great distresses of those times. The complaint of scarcity continued so great to the reign of Severus, that the people were very seditious, and killed the emperor's favourite Cleander ; and Severus afterward made it his principal care to remedy this great evil to which the city was so continually exposed. All these things well agree with the hieroglyphics of this third roll.

SEAL IV.] Then the fourth seal was opened, and a ghastly figure presented itself. " There appeared a pale horse, and upon him was mounted a rider whose name was Death. And another followed him, and seemed as if seated behind him, who was called Hell or Hades. These had a commission, giving

giving them power over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death (*i. e.* with pestilence) and with the beasts of the earth."

There can be no difficulty in fixing the general meaning of these hieroglyphics; they explain themselves. In plain language the prediction is this, that there should be a remarkable time when Death would be commissioned to make very extraordinary destruction, so that mankind through a quarter part of the empire should be cut off by four great judgments, brought upon them about the same time, *viz.* the sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts. This is conformable to the prophecy of Ezekiel against Israel, chapter xiv. verse 21. "For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I shall send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast." And chapter xxxiii. verse 27, "Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; as I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence."

This prediction in the fourth cover was remarkably fulfilled from the reign of Caracalla A. D. 211, to the reign of Aurelian A. D. 270. Through all that period historians give an account of little else but tyranny, tumults, usurpations, murders, civil wars, famine, pestilence, and all kinds of calamities which usually spread desolation and destruction through the world. The Roman army set up emperors, and deposed and murdered them at their pleasure.

pleasure. Competitors for the empire were jealous of each other, and of every one around them, and massacred all whom they suspected of disaffection to them. Thirty different emperors were set up by the armies in various parts of the empire, within the short space of ten years ; and all these were constantly warring against each other. At the same time the northern barbarians began to break in upon the provinces : And the Persians carried all before them in the east ; took the emperor Valerian prisoner ; and treated him with great severity to his death. Great scarcity, and even famine, prevailed in those times of general confusion and slaughter, as might reasonably be expected, and the history of those reigns informs us. But above all, so great a pestilence raged in the reigns of Gallus and Volusian as was never equalled : It began in Ethiopia, spread through all the provinces of the empire, and depopulated them for fifteen years together. Zosimus, in his history, says of this plague, While war raged in every part, a pestilence spread through all towns and villages, and destroyed the remainder of mankind ; and adds that so great a destruction of men, had not hitherto ever happened in former times. As to the other judgment of wild beasts, an author, quoted by Bishop Newton, expressly mentions a remarkable instance of their prevalence at that time : He says, five hundred wolves together entered into a city which was deserted of its inhabitants, and where the younger Maximin was at that very time. Mr. Mede suggests, that this judgment may be taken figuratively, for the many murders committed by furious tyrants and their savage instruments, who, like wild beasts

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let loose upon the world, added to the destruction which death, in all other forms, was making among mankind : Yet he prefers the literal meaning. In any country not entirely cultivated, where large forests remain to be haunts for wild beasts, it is not hard to conceive, that they may soon be exceedingly multiplied, when the inhabitants are greatly thinned by pestilence and wars, and become terrible and destructive to those who remain. If the vast wilderness of America had been the safe range of tigers, bears, wolves, and other fierce animals, without molestation from the native salvages, the Europeans could not have gained their settlements without great interruption from the wild beasts, and continual loss of lives. No doubt in ancient times, when men were not furnished with such convenient instruments to destroy the wild beasts, as in modern ages, their multiplication might be a very destructive judgment, at least by their devouring the fields, and the cattle, and so defeating the labour of men for procuring necessary food. God gives the Israelites this reason why he would not drive out the nations of Canaan before them in one year, viz. "lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee*." But we may understand the prediction of this seal in a more general sense, as signifying, that men should be destroyed by all those judgments which were threatened by the ancient prophets, and in all the ways in which Death executes the most extraordinary commission. And upon the whole view of the above-mentioned period, in which Death, in all its methods of destruction, made such havock in the Roman empire, we may conclude this period to be pointed

* Exodus xxiii. 29.

pointed out by the hieroglyphical figures under this seal.

SEAL V.] The fifth seal being opened, something very different from the former hieroglyphics appeared. All the preceding were horses and their riders : But now St. John " saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth. And white robes were given to every one of them ; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

Before this we find no particular premonition of the terrible persecutions which christians were to suffer under the Roman emperors, while the foregoing judgments were executed. But now a plain intimation is given, that multitudes, through the former periods, were slain, and their souls now appear in vision at the bottom of the altar, as if they were still living, and crying to God that their blood might be avenged. Notice is given them, that the time is not yet come for just vengeance to be executed on their persecutors ; but more and greater persecutions remain to be endured ; and many more of their brethren and fellow servants must be killed as they were, until the whole number of Martyrs should be completed. They must therefore rest a little longer : But they have a comfortable intimation, that as soon as the wise and holy designs of Providence, in suffering the heathen emperors so cruelly

cruelly to afflict the church, shall be fulfilled, which will be but a short time, their earnest cries shall be answered, and their blood avenged.

Whether the altar in this vision is a representation of the altar of sacrifices in the court of the temple, or the altar of incense in the holy place, is of no great consequence. For by a very common figure it may be said, that they who have suffered martyrdom for Christ, have sacrificed their lives for him, and suffered with him. Christians are exhorted by St. Paul, to “present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God* :” And why may not the martyrs be said to have presented their dead bodies as a sacrifice to him? Not a sacrifice of atonement, but of gratitude. At least the martyrs might be considered as victims, sacrificed by the heathen to their gods, and therefore might, with some propriety, be represented in vision as lying at the foot of God’s altar, offering their complaints and cries to him, whether we consider this as the altar of burnt offering, or that of incense.

The white robes given to every one of them, signify their acceptance with God as righteous persons, worthy of the honor and dignity of being made kings and priests unto God, that they may reign with Christ, and join the holy society in the heavenly state.

Here therefore we have additional evidence that the events marked out by the opening of three preceding seals, relate to the Roman empire in its state of heathenism. For the first general and cruel persecutions of the church were by the heathen emperors. And as farther persecutions are here

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foretold,

* Romans xii. 1.

foretold, before the church should have peace by the execution of just vengeance on its enemies, which nevertheless should be but for a little season; we are plainly directed to the time when the last, and most extensive, and violent persecution was coming on, viz. to the reign of Dioclesian. To predict this great persecution, begun by Dioclesian, and continued ten years under him and his successors, is the design of the vision under this seal; as likewise to comfort the church when it came, and encourage the expectation that God would appear in a short time to grant deliverance, and punish the enemies of the gospel for all their cruelties. Though the slaughter was to be great, and the whole number appointed for martyrdom to be completed, after a little time the church should have rest. And this persecution was indeed the last and most terrible effort of the heathen emperors to eradicate christianity. Incredible numbers of christians suffered death, and all manner of tortures which malice and cruelty could invent; so that the emperors were ready to boast that they had wholly effaced the name and superstition of the christians, and perfectly restored the worship of the gods. But in a very short time after this, christianity rose again and became victorious by the favor of Constantine the great, and all idolatry fell before it.

The sixth seal was then opened, being the last of the rolls which inclosed the principal book, and a most surprising representation of the end of the world was exhibited to St. John. A great earthquake seemed to shake the whole creation. The sun immediately became black, as if covered over with a black haircloth. The moon changed the usual paleness

paleness of her face into a bloody red. The stars fell down from heaven to the earth, as untimely fruit falls in showers from a fig tree when shaken by a mighty wind. And the expanse of heaven departed, and was rolled up together, as a parchment is rolled up to be laid aside. On earth all the mountains and islands were shaken out of their places : And all mankind were filled with amazement, terror, and anguish. Kings and potentates ; the rich, honorable, and mighty ; they who had made the world tremble at their power, together with the meanest of their slaves ; men of all ranks and conditions, in the utmost agonies of fear, fled every way to hide themselves in dens and rocks of the mountains ; crying to the mountains and rocks—" Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb ; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand ?"

These figures strongly paint the amazing scene which will really be exhibited at the end of this present world. The heavens will pass away with a great noise ; the elements will melt with fervent heat ; the earth also and the works that are therein will be burnt up ; and all the things which we behold will be dissolved. The son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power, and great glory ; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn and be filled with terror when they behold him.

But though the amazing picture under this seal is drawn from the final catastrophe of the universe ; yet the design was not to be a prophecy of the end of the world ; as if that great day should come immediately after the fulfilment of the things signified

by the foregoing seals : For upon this supposition there could have been no place for any of the succeeding visions. The destruction of nations and kingdoms, and the great and distressing revolutions in political systems, may, with great propriety, be compared to the final dissolution of the natural system. Of this we have many instances in the sacred writings. The language of this vision is the very same which is used by the ancient prophets when they speak of great changes in the world, and the overthrow of kingdoms. Isaiah speaks in the same figures when he prophesies of the destruction of Babylon—" * The day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate ; and he shall destroy the sinners out of it : For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof shall not give their light ; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine—I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger—I will stir up the spirit of the Medes against him."—Again in Isaiah xxxiv. 4. the prophet, denouncing judgments against the nations, particularly against Idumea, speaks in the very language of this vision—" All the host of heaven shall be dissolved ; and the heaven shall be rolled together as a scroll ; and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree." So when the same prophet threatens Israel and all idolaters with the day of God's wrath which should bring down their haughtiness, he says—" They shall go into the holes of the

* Isaiah xiii. 9, 10. 13.

the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth*.” Hosea likewise describes the consternation of Israel, when the high places of their idolatrous worship should be destroyed, and their idolatry punished with the utter ruin of their kingdom, and perpetual captivity, in the same figures—“† The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel shall be destroyed; the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars: And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us.”—And Ezekiel prophesies of the destruction of Egypt in the same metaphors—“When I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light; all the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord‡.”

From all the foregoing passages in the Old Testament, and others which might be collected, it appears, that any remarkable day of the execution of divine judgments upon nations for high crimes, especially upon idolaters, by which they are brought into great distress, is described in figures taken from the end of the world; that such great commotions and changes as threaten and bring on great revolutions in the world, are compared to great convulsions of nature; that the confusion and ruin of the governing powers of a political system, are compared to darkening the great lights of heaven, and falling of the stars; and that the fear, amazement, and distress, which all ranks of men discover when such

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* Isaiah ii. 19.

† Hosea x. 8.

‡ Ezekiel xxxii. 7, 8.

great calamities and changes come upon them, are represented by the terror and anguish of the wicked at the great day of judgment and consummation of all things.

Therefore, agreeably to the prophetic style, we may interpret this vision under the sixth seal, as a prediction of some remarkable judgment to be brought on those idolatrous powers which had so long vexed, and cruelly persecuted the christian church. As the foregoing seal contained the cries of the souls of the martyrs, that their blood might be avenged ; to which an encouraging answer was given, that they must rest yet a little season, until the whole number of martyrs should be completed : So the opening of the sixth seal shews, that the time is come for the execution of divine vengeance upon the idolatrous persecuting powers ; when all their authority should be at an end, and to their astonishment and confusion they should see the power of Christ manifested in the overthrow of the whole idolatrous system.

This evidently points out the time of Constantine the great ; who, after the church had suffered a long and most severe persecution under Diocletian and Maximian, obtained the empire, embraced the christian faith, and put an end to the heathen religion of Rome by the establishment of christianity as the religion of the empire.

This sudden surprising revolution in the Roman empire in favour of christianity, was like a mighty earthquake to the Pagan powers, by which the whole system of their religious polity was overturned. The zeal of all ranks for the religion of their ancestors, and of the empire, was carried to the height of superstition, as is natural to mankind ;
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and multitudes depended on the Pagan establishment for their living : Therefore when all orders of priests lost their usual support ; when their power over the minds of the people was gone ; when the zealots among the people saw christians advanced to places of honor and power over them ; it can scarcely be imagined, what great vexation of mind they suffered. How deeply must they have felt the shock given to their religion ? All the great lights of paganism were darkened, and it was to them like the dissolution of the world, from which, though filled with wild dismay, they could find no shelter. A prediction of such an extraordinary revolution in the religious state of the Roman empire, might reasonably be expected in a revelation given for the comfort of the church ; and by this the whole prophecy is greatly confirmed.

S C E N E IV.—C H A P. VII.

This Scene shews a Time of great Tranquillity : During which the faithful Servants of GOD, among all Nations of professing Christians, are marked for him, and distinguished from common Professors, to be under his peculiar Protection : Their Number is small in Proportion to the Whole, but a great Multitude when viewed separately. The same Sealing, or Marking, is continued afterwards among all Nations through succeeding Ages, until there is a Multitude which no Man can number : And a Representation is given of their perfect Joy and Felicity in Heaven.

TH E visions which appeared at the opening of the sixth seal, by which the inmost and principal roll was divested of all its covers, are still

continued : For the seventh seal is not yet broken ; but with the opening of the seventh the second prophecy begins.

After the representation of the dissolution of the Pagan system of the empire, in the same roll St. John "saw four angels, standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds ; that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." Then he "saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God : And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads."

The four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, or at the four cardinal points, holding the four winds that they might not blow, naturally intimates that the angels are God's ministers, as they are called at the end of the 103d Psalm, and other scriptures ; that they here stand prepared to execute his will, by raising great wars and commotions from all quarters of the world, and so to bring distress upon the Roman empire. But until the word was given, they were appointed to preserve a perfect calm ; that the world might enjoy an interval of profound peace and security. Great national troubles are metaphorically described, in the prophecies of the Old Testament, by the blowing of violent winds, which sometimes irresistibly tear up and sweep away every thing before them. Isaiah comforts the people of God with an assurance that mercy should be mixed with judgment, and that God would not utterly destroy them as he had
destroyed

destroyed their enemies ; but would deliver them from one judgment before he sent another ; and he makes use of the metaphor of the winds—"He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind* :"—*i. e.* When a tempest of trouble comes from one quarter, he will delay bringing upon them afflictions from another quarter. In the same style Jeremiah prophesies of the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Chaldeans—"† A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan nor to cleanse ; even a full wind from those places shall come unto me : Now also will I give sentence against them. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind : His horses are swifter than eagles. Wo unto us ; for we are spoiled !" Jeremiah's prophecy against Elam is remarkably similar to the present vision—"‡ Upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds, and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come."

The angel ascending from the east is most probably an emblem of Jesus Christ himself, whose gospel, like the light of the sun, shined first from the eastern parts of the world, and from thence made its progress toward the west, enlightening the nations in its course. Christ himself is called by Malachi—the sun of righteousness—and therefore is properly represented here as ascending from the east. As one who has high authority, he gives his command to the angels of Providence, and forbids them

* Isaiah xxvii. 8.

‡ Jeremiah xlix. 36.

† Jeremiah iv. 11, 12, 13.

them to let loose the four winds, or execute the judgments which they had in commission, until they had first sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.

Ezekiel had a vision which greatly resembles this. “* He saw six men, to whom a charge over Jerusalem was given, coming every man by God’s command with a slaughter weapon in his hand ; and one man among them was clothed with linen, and had an inkhorn by his side. And God called to him that had the inkhorn, and said, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said, Go ye after him through the city, and smite : Let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women : But come not near any man upon whom is the mark : And begin at my sanctuary.” Just so, these four angels come to execute God’s judgments on the world, and on the church as corrupted with it, from the four quarters of the earth : And one having greater authority than these, commands them to stay their hand until the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads. Ezekiel’s vision therefore directs to the true interpretation of this. God had then determined to bring great calamities upon Jerusalem and the whole nation. They all were called his people ; but it was only a small number among them who sincerely mourned for the prevailing abominations which were practised. Therefore great slaughter was to be made among the rest without mercy : But a mark was to be set upon

upon the men that feared God with all their hearts, that the destroying angels might spare them. So the Israelites were distinguished, when all the first born of the Egyptians were slain. In the same manner, in this vision preparation is making for great distress and destruction in the Roman empire, though it would abound with christian professors : On these professors judgments were to be brought, as well as on others, for their provoking crimes ; they having notoriously departed from the spirit and practice of christianity. For if all who had the name of christians were to be exempt from those judgments, a particular mark was unnecessary : The outward profession was easily known, and a sufficient mark of distinction between them and the heathen. But now there was to be a distinction in the sight of God and the angels, between formal corrupt christians, who differed only in name from the rest of the world, and such as were real believers of the gospel, whose hearts and lives were effectually brought under its government. And the meaning of their being marked on their foreheads is, that all the characters, by which the people of God are marked out in his word, must be found upon them ; and that they shall be as perfectly singled out in his omniscient eye, distinguished by his Providence, and taken under his special care, as if they were openly marked with some divine signature on their foreheads. So St. Paul speaks of christians as sealed with the holy spirit of promise. It is also intimated, that this church of sincere believers shall not be destroyed, whatever storms may come upon the world ; but shall be continued, though a little remnant, to bear testimony for Christ from age to age, in the midst of all the corruptions

ruptions of christianity ; and that it shall in due time increase to an innumerable multitude, and at the consummation of all things, be collected into one general assembly and glorious society, which shall rejoice together forever in heaven.

Therefore the intention of the vision thus far may be expressed in this plain language, That after the establishment of christianity in the empire by Constantine, there should be a season of great tranquillity in the state and in the christian church, that there might be opportunity for the Gospel to spread and prevail among all nations, and that numbers might be gathered to Christ who should bear the true marks of his disciples ; and that after this universal call by the gospel, great storms of trouble should come on the world, and the church as connected with it. But that God would preserve a number of sincere christians, as his true church, through all times of danger and distress, even to the end of the world.

Agreeably to this prophecy, for fifteen years after Constantine had established christianity as the religion of the empire, viz. to the year 337, there was such undisturbed peace through all his dominions as had not been known for a long time before ; and though after that time troubles arose in Constantine's family, by which it was at length extinguished, yet for twenty seven years after, viz. to the year 363, the peace of church and state was in a great degree continued ; except, that in the short reign of Julian the apostate, a violent effort was made by him to restore paganism again, which was its last dying struggle. In this season of tranquillity the number of christian professors was greatly multiplied in all parts of the empire ; but the church began to be visibly corrupt-

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ed by too intimate a connexion with the civil powers. For when Constantine removed the imperial seat from Rome to Constantinople, and brought the state under new regulations, he new modelled the church likewise in conformity to the state, and introduced all those high distinctions, prerogatives, and emoluments, among the ministers of the church, which made way for the exaltation of Antichrist. Ambition, avarice, luxury, and all the concomitant vices soon infected the clergy, and spread over the whole church ; so that Marcellinus, an heathen writer, about the year 366, speaking of the Bishops of that day, says,—“ I own that when I reflect on the pomp attending that dignity, I do not at all wonder, that those who are fond of show and parade, should scold, quarrel, fight, and strain every nerve to attain it ; since they are sure, if they succeed, to be enriched with the offerings of the ladies ; to appear no more abroad on foot, but in stately chariots gorgeously attired ; to keep costly and sumptuous tables ; nay, and to surpass the emperors themselves in the splendor and magnificence of their entertainments.”—Prætextatus, a man of the first quality, and zealously attached to paganism, in a familiar conversation with Damasus bishop of Rome, about the year 370, said, “ Make me bishop of Rome, and I will immediately turn christian.” The church so corrupted was rendered justly an object of divine resentments, and therefore doomed to bear a full part in those calamities which very soon after came like a whirlwind upon the empire.

The account of the numbers sealed among the twelve tribes of Israel, cannot reasonably be understood in a literal sense. The twelve tribes of Israel, agreeably

agreeably to the current language of this book, in which the christian church is spoken of in terms properly belonging to the jewish, as has been already observed, must here signify the whole visible christian church; and the variation observable in the enumeration of the tribes shew it to be figurative. Christians are figuratively called Abraham's seed, the circumcision, and the Israel of God, in St. Paul's epistles: And the true church of God is one from the beginning. The whole number of the sealed is here made to amount to 144,000, out of each tribe or nation of christians 12,000: A very small number compared with the great multitudes who then professed christianity. It is raised from the radical number twelve, to shew enigmatically, that God's sealed servants are they who have received and obeyed the doctrines of the apostles, who laid the foundation of the christian church; and have the faith of the patriarchs of the Old Testament: And it may also intimate, that wherever the gospel spreads, it will have a complete effect upon numbers, whom God will acknowledge as his peculiar people, though multitudes make no other than a formal profession.

But that it might not be imagined that those who were sealed during that time of the church's tranquillity, after it was established in the Roman empire, were the whole number which should ever become true converts to Christ; St. John saw, *after this*, "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms [*i. e.* palm branches] in their hands: Who cried with a loud

loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." This is an enlarged prospect of the true church, through all succeeding ages even to the end of the world; and is designed to give assurance to all who wish the prosperity of the church, that the gospel will be continued in the world notwithstanding every attempt to corrupt or abolish christianity, and have some happy effect even in the darkest and most discouraging times; and that a true and faithful church will be preserved through the long period of antichristian apostasy, at length become triumphant over all its enemies, and finally appear in the perfection of purity and joy in the heavenly world. The palm branches in the hands of this great multitude, which were ancient signals of joy and victory, justify this observation.

All the angels standing round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four cherubim, are then represented as uniting with the church of the redeemed in worshipping and glorifying God, falling on their faces, and saying, "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen." This shews, that the joy of the church is also the joy of angels, and that all heaven joins in celebrating the high praises of God for the manifestations of his wisdom and power, goodness and mercy, in his works of creation, providence, and redemption.

One of the four and twenty elders, after this song of praise, came to St. John, and put this question, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?" And when the apostle referred

referred the answer back, the elder gave him this answer, " These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple : And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more ; neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The above answer, which declares who they are who appear in so great numbers glorifying God for their salvation, shows that the vision looks forward, through all the ages of antichristian corruption and persecutions of the church, to the end of those days of tribulation, and brings into one view the whole multitude of sealed christians, who endured great afflictions, persevered in the profession and practice of truth and righteousness, and cheerfully laid down their lives for Christ's sake. They were victors in this warfare for the gospel, and therefore appear with palm branches in their hands triumphant. They were made righteous persons, by that faith in the blood of Christ which purified their hearts and lives ; therefore they are clothed in white robes, and are before the throne of God as priests, to minister before him forever in his heavenly temple. And the happiness which they enjoy is described by a perfect exemption from all kinds of evils to which they were exposed in this life, and the full possession of every thing which satisfies and delights

delights the soul of man in the immediate presence of God. This description is an anticipation of the vision of the New Jerusalem and Paradise with which the Revelation concludes.

This vision of the innumerable multitude which came out of great tribulation, after the days of tranquillity and the first sealing of the servants of God, clearly confirms what has been already observed, viz. that this implies a prediction of more, longer, and greater afflictions of the church, than those which had been endured under the heathen emperors : But that the saints should at last triumph over their antichristian enemies, rejoice in the prevalence of Christ's kingdom on earth, and be admitted into the temple of God in the heavenly world, where is fulness of joy and pleasures everlasting.

PROPHECY THE SECOND.

CHAPTERS VIII—XI.

Great Judgments brought on the World by the Destruction of the civil Empire of Rome ; the Rise of Mahomet ; the Arms of the Saracens ; and the Power of the Turkish Armies. The Profanation of the visible Church under the Reign of Antichrist, and a general View of the Destruction of Antichrist's Kingdom.

SCENE I.—CHAP. VIII.

This Scene exhibits the great Events consequent upon the Opening of the Seventh Seal. Seven Angels appear with seven Trumpets. Four of the Trumpets are here sounded, and the Roman Empire is invaded on all Sides by Multitudes of barbarous Nations from the North ; by which the Imperial Power in the West is totally abolished, and the Glory of the eastern Empire greatly eclipsed.

THE Lord Jesus Christ had already opened the seals of the six outer rolls of the book which he had in his hand, and shewed their contents. And now he breaks the seventh seal, belonging to the inmost roll which contained the principal prophecies relating to the church. But before this book is opened and the contents made known, there is a solemn pause ; heaven keeps profound silence for a short space, expecting a complete declaration of the wonderful designs of Providence.

While this silence continues, great preparation is made for the execution of some extraordinary judgments upon the world. Seven angels came from their

their station before the throne of God, “and to them were given seven trumpets.” Then “another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer : And there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth : And there were thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.”

Here perhaps is some allusion to the Jewish worship on the great day of expiation. Sir Isaac Newton observes, that it was the custom on that day for “the high priest to take fire from the great altar in a golden censer ; and when he was come down from the great altar, he took incense from one of the priests, who brought it to him, and went with it to the golden altar ; and while he offered the incense, the people prayed without in silence, which is the silence in heaven for half an hour.” But notwithstanding the propriety of this allusion, it is not necessary to confine the interpretation of this part of the vision strictly to this custom of the Jewish worship ; which indeed may afford some useful hints, but may not be similar to this vision in every particular. The silence in heaven seems not merely to signify the united supplications of the church, though this may partly be intended ; but the great solemnity with which the heavenly spirits were attending to hear what was to be revealed by the opening of this inmost roll.

The appearance of seven angels with seven trumpets, signifies in general, that the world was to have

seven great alarms after the times to which the preceding prophecy refers, by wars, desolation, and destruction ; and that God would employ his angels, who stand waiting for his commands, to execute his just vengeance upon the nations for all their provoking sins, especially for the great corruptions of christianity, and persecutions of the saints. The blowing of trumpets was in ancient times the well known signal of war ; and the expression of blowing the trumpet is so frequent in the Old Testament when wars are foretold, that particular examples need not be produced.

The angel, who stands at the altar with his golden censer, is performing a service like that of the jewish high priest ; and therefore most properly represents Jesus Christ the great High Priest of our profession, who makes continual intercession for his people before God, and renders their prayers and praises acceptable through his own merits, as if accompanied with the sweetest perfumes.

But there is something peculiarly significant in this prelude to the sounding of the trumpets. It most naturally suggests, that the judgments to be executed by the seven angels were to be in answer to the earnest prayers of the saints, under great afflictions, and mourning for the abominations committed by the professors of christianity. As the souls under the altar, who had been slain for the word of God under the persecuting powers of heathen Rome, had cried with a loud voice,—“ How long, O Lord holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ? ”—Their cry was still remembered : The dissolution of the pagan

pagan system was not sufficient vengeance on the empire ; but the prayers of those martyrs should receive a farther answer : And the cries of all who were, in following ages, to suffer in the same manner, should prevail with God, through the intercession of Christ for his people, to bring repeated plagues on their enemies, at the sounding of the several trumpets.

To confirm God's people in the assurance, that divine wrath would be manifested from time to time against the enemies of truth and righteousness ; when this angel had performed his office as a priest and intercessor, he filled his censer with fire from the altar, and cast it down upon the earth : And immediately there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. Here we may call to mind the words of Christ to his disciples, " I am come to send fire on the earth ;" for he has power to judge the nations in the course of Providence, try the faith and patience of his people, and execute vengeance on his adversaries. It seems very improper to interpret the angel's casting his censer with coals of fire down upon the earth, as a meer allusion to the high priest in the jewish worship casting fire for burning the goat which was the Lord's lot ; or the voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquake, as referring to the voice of the high priest reading the law, and other voices and thunderings from the trumpets and temple music at the sacrifices, and lightnings from the fire of the altar. It is most natural, and more agreeable to the design of the vision, to consider these as signals of divine wrath upon the earth. They suggest ideas of terror, and denote God's judgments sent down upon the world,

filling it with great tumult and uproar, terrifying and convulsing kingdoms, and threatening their destruction.

Therefore the general meaning of this part of the vision is, that soon after that interval of peace which the church should enjoy, when christianity became the religion of the empire, preparation should be made for the punishment of that empire for the cruel slaughter of such multitudes of christians under the former emperors ; and also for the signal manifestations of divine anger against hypocritical and corrupt christians, and all who should in succeeding ages depart from the faith, and join in promoting idolatrous worship and persecuting those who adhere to the word of God : And that divine judgments should begin with universal commotions, and terrible alarms.

Notwithstanding the astonishing change made in the religion of the Roman empire, the guilt of it, as a body politic, was not expiated : Full vengeance had not yet been taken for the slaughter of so many thousands of saints. Their blood still cried to heaven, and God was determined to avenge it. Mr. Mede expresses himself on this head with great propriety and strength—" Would not he, who did not allow even a beast to be spared who had killed a man, made in the image of his Creator, demand satisfaction of an empire, which had for so many years been slaying the martyrs, for the blood of his servants ? Nor can we suppose that the piety of the christian emperors, who at last obtained the power, ought to be looked upon sufficient to put a stop to the just judgments of God, any more than the piety of Josiah prevailed to exempt the kingdom of Judah

dah from that destruction decreed against it, for the guilt of bloodshed by Manasseh." The common profession of christianity was indeed so far from being a bar to divine judgments, that it was really a farther reason for the punishment of such a guilty empire. For though the public religion was changed, and the government had become friendly to the gospel ; yet the main body of professors, who now composed the greater part of the empire, were so corrupted, by means of the favor of the civil powers, in doctrine, worship, and practice, and so conformed to the spirit of the world, that they might very justly be involved in the same judgments which were due to heathen Rome.

Now these great and alarming commotions which preceded the sounding of the trumpets, point out the beginning of the great calamities which came upon the empire soon after the extinction of the family of Constantine, viz. from A. D. 353 to the end of the reign of Theodosius, A.D. 395. At that time the four angels let loose the four winds, which began a terrible whirlwind on the earth, and the thunderings, lightnings, and earthquake came on. All the Roman provinces were alarmed with invasions from every quarter, and harassed by a great number of barbarous nations, from whose violence they at first defended themselves, and maintained their own territories.

TRUMPET I.] But immediately after this, the first trumpet sounded ; " And there followed hail and fire mingled with blood ; and they were cast upon the earth : And the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." This was the fire which the angel with the golden censer

cast down upon the earth. And this was also the first great effect of the winds let loose by the four angels. The trees and green grass were burnt up : The fruits of the land were devoured wherever the enemy came, and distress and slaughter attended their progress.

This is an evident allusion to one of the plagues sent upon the Egyptians : The Lord sent upon them "thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground ; and the hail smote, throughout all the land of Egypt, all that was in the field, and brake every tree of the field." But in this vision blood is added to the fire and hail, that it may not be understood merely of great devastation, but of much slaughter likewise. David describes the vengeance of God against his enemies in like figures—" * The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice ; hailstones and coals of fire : Yea, he shot out his arrows and scattered them ; and he shot out lightnings and discomfited them."—In similar language Isaiah prophesies of the invasion of Israel by the Assyrians—" † Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which, as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand."—Again ; he describes the destruction coming on the Assyrians by hostile armies in the same metaphors—" ‡ The Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones." To these, other quotations from the Old Testament might

* Psa. xviii. 13, 14. † Isa. xxviii. 2. ‡ Isa. xxx. 30, 31.

might be added : But the above texts are sufficient to shew the meaning of such figures. Therefore by the same representations in this vision, wars, invasions, desolations, and great slaughter of men, are signified : And as hail commonly comes out of the north, the hail may properly intimate that the wars coming on the empire were to be from the northern nations of Europe ; though at length they surrounded it on every side.

Sigonius, in his history of the western empire, says—" * Upon the death of Theodosius, the strength and dignity of the empire itself began to totter."—And he speaks of the year 400 as the most memorable of all which the western empire had seen ; for, says he—" † No kind of calamity which wars occasion, or of barbarous ferocity, or unbridled licentiousness, could be thought of, which was not exemplified in the greatest extremes upon all the provinces, cities, villages, and inhabitants." From that time to the middle of the following century, history is filled with accounts of armies of various nations from the north of Europe breaking in every where upon the provinces of the empire, burning, depopulating, laying them waste, and setting up new kingdoms in them. The capital city, Rome, did not escape the rage of the barbarians ; but was repeatedly besieged, taken, and sacked : And so this judgment fell upon men of all ranks. Men of honor and power, who were like stately trees in the field, as well as the common people who were like the green grass, were alike consumed. Such were the distressing and destructive effects of the first trumpet.

TRUMPET

* Sigonius de Occident. Imp. p. 155.

† Sigon. Occ. Imp. p. 251.

TRUMPET II.] The second angel then sounded, "and as it were a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea : And the third part of the sea became blood ; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died, and the third part of the ships were destroyed."

There are some remarkable passages in Jeremiah which may ascertain the meaning of this hieroglyphic. Speaking of the downfall of Babylon he says—" * I will render unto Babylon, and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, all their evil that they have done unto Zion in your sight, saith the Lord. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyeth all the earth : And I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations ; but thou shalt be desolate forever, saith the Lord." In this text it is plain, that Babylon is compared to a mountain on account of its grandeur and power, which rendered it conspicuous among the nations. It was the capital of a vast empire, of such strength that it seemed to stand firm as a mountain which no human force could overthrow. It is called a destroying mountain, because it destroyed many kingdoms, and especially had brought desolation on Jerusalem and the temple of God. And God threatens, notwithstanding it appeared so lofty and immoveable, to stretch out his hand against it, and roll it down from the rock, *i. e.* to overthrow it as effectually, and in as violent a manner, as if some lofty mountain should be overturned,

* Jeremiah li. 24, 25, 26. 42.

ed, and rolled over all the crags and precipices below it. Moreover, the prophet speaks of it as overwhelmed with the sea—"The sea is come up upon Babylon; she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof." In these texts we have a very clear illustration of the meaning of what follows upon the sounding of this second trumpet. It did not avail that great city Babylon, which had destroyed and captivated God's people, that the captives were at length released by Cyrus, and sent back to rebuild the temple with peculiar marks of favor and beneficence; but judgment remained to be executed for her tyranny over the nations, and rage against God's peculiar people. So Rome, the capital of the world, had been a destroying mountain, subduing all kingdoms of the earth under its power: It had in a particular manner exerted its utmost force to destroy the church of Christ: Therefore it is doomed to be destroyed in the same manner as ancient Babylon. It would not avail her, that at length her emperors became favorers of christianity: The guilt of blood, the blood of the apostles and multitudes of saints, remained upon her; and she was to be made a signal monument of divine vengeance; to be rolled down from the height of her grandeur, all on fire, into the sea, *i. e.* to be overwhelmed with the northern armies of barbarians, taken, sacked, burnt, and to lose her high imperial authority, and not be exalted above the nations any longer. She was thrown into the sea metaphorically, when she was overwhelmed with multitudes of enemies; the third part of the sea became blood, and the third part of the creatures in the sea died, by the great slaughter made in these wars

wars in all the provinces dependent on her ; and the third part of the ships were destroyed, when a great part of her traffic, sources of wealth, and naval power were cut off, and she could no longer visit and defend her provinces beyond the seas.

All this is verified in history. The storm of war predicted by the first trumpet fell principally on the more remote provinces of the empire, though Rome itself then had a great share in the calamities of war. But about the year 452, the divine anger began to be more directly pointed against Rome and Italy. About this time we may fix the beginning of the effects of the second trumpet, which proceed until the imperial city was thrown down from its grandeur, and lost its authority over the nations. Genferic, king of the Vandals, who had lately conquered Africa, landed in Italy with a powerful army, marched directly to Rome, entered it without opposition, and abandoned it to the mercy of his soldiers, who continued plundering it fourteen days, and not only pillaged private houses, but stripped the public buildings of all their richest ornaments, and even the churches of their sacred vessels. Among the spoils, they carried away some of those sacred vessels which had been formerly taken by Titus out of the temple of Jerusalem and brought to Rome. In the year 471 Rome was again besieged, taken, and plundered by Ricimer, a general in the Roman service, who revolted, and put himself at the head of the barbarians who had served under him. And lastly, in the year 476, the troops of the northern nations, who had been employed in the Roman armies as allies, claimed a third part of the lands in Italy as the reward

ward of their services ; and being refused revolted, and chose Odoacer for their leader ; who soon made himself master of Rome, deposed the emperor Augustulus, and assumed to himself the title of king of Italy. And soon after this, Theodoric, with an army of Goths from Illyricum, attacked Odoacer, overcame, and put him to death ; and so founded the gothic kingdom of Italy, and made Ravenna the capital city : But gave the Romans the privilege of governing themselves by their own laws and customs, with due acknowledgments of their subjection to his kingly authority. Thus ended the famous empire of Rome, except that faint shadow of the former government which continued in the city, under the gothic kings, until that kingdom was subdued by the Greek emperor Justinian, in the year 553. Rome, that great city, was thrown down from its power and grandeur by fire and sword, and overwhelmed by floods of barbarous nations, as is predicted by the second trumpet.

TRUMPET III.] At the sound of the third trumpet, “ a great star fell from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters : And the name of the star is called Wormwood ; and the third part of the waters became wormwood : And many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.”

This seems to have some reference to that plague of Egypt which was brought upon the waters of the river ; “ by which all the waters were turned into blood, and the fishes that were in the river died, and the river stank ; and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river ; and there was blood throughout

throughout all the land of Egypt." But there is some difference. By this trumpet the waters are made bitter as wormwood : By that plague they were turned into blood. Therefore this third trumpet does not seem to portend the slaughter of mankind by wars, but great public distress by the inefficacy and confusion of government, from which power, justice, wealth, comfort, and prosperity, flow like rivers through every part of a nation. All the streams and sources of defence and comfort, were to be turned into the bitterness of disappointment and disgust, sorrow and death.

It is uncertain whether any thing more is meant by the great star falling from heaven, burning like a lamp, than that some angel was sent, as a minister of Providence to embitter the waters : For at the sound of the fifth trumpet a star is seen falling from heaven to the earth ; which must be understood of an angel gliding through the air like a meteor, to whom, as a messenger from God, was given the key of the bottomless pit. Indeed sometimes, stars in the prophetic style signify kings and men of note and authority. Balaam speaks of Christ as a star to come out of Jacob. Daniel, prophesying of the pride and prevailing power of Antiochus over the priests and princes of Jerusalem, says, the little horn of the goat " waxed great even to the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground."—Isaiah speaks of the king of Babylon, as proudly aiming to exalt his throne above the stars of God, *i. e.* above the greatest princes of the earth ; but by the righteous judgment of God cast down from the height of his glory, as if the bright morning star had been plucked from the firmament,

firmament, and cast down to the ground*. Therefore if it should be supposed that the fall of the blazing star in this vision means the fall of some high power, it may be applied to the remarkable fall of the imperial power, after the city of Rome was thrown down like a burning mountain into the sea. Though the Romans, after their subjection to the gothic kings, were allowed to retain their own form of government in all other respects, yet they could not presume to set up an emperor again without a plain renunciation of their allegiance to their new masters : The imperial power was fallen to the earth, and did not rise again. And the fall of this power affected all the rivers and fountains of waters, *i. e.* all the subordinate branches of power, and all the streams and sources of authority, wealth, comfort, and even life, in all the distant provinces of the former empire, so that the usual supplies could not be drawn from them, and they were left to languish and perish under intestine quarrels, and feeble struggles for their own security, comfort, and civil order.

Or we may have another view of the fall of some remarkable person or power. The Romans under the kingdom of the Goths, while they endeavoured to preserve their own government, soon got into great cabals, and in the management of their civil affairs often found themselves obliged to have recourse to the bishop of Rome, for his advice, in order to compose their quarrels. He, having by this time grown very great and powerful in the church, now found an opportunity of getting into his hands great power in civil matters also ; and dexterously improved this advantage, transgressed his line as
bishop

* Isaiah xiv. 12, 13.

bishop of the church, and began to seek the honor and power of this world, and exercise his authority in the most assuming and arbitrary manner. The falling meteor therefore may, perhaps without impropriety, be applied to him. From his glory, as a bright star in the church, he fell to the earth, pursued worldly views, and infected church and state with corrupt religion and arbitrary maxims; and so rendered both religion and government, which ought to diffuse their salutary influence through all orders of men, disgusting and pernicious.

But in the more general sense, first mentioned, the interpretation may be easier, and with great certainty may be applied to historical facts in the order of the events of this vision. By the rivers and fountains of waters being made bitter like wormwood by a minister of Providence sent for that purpose, an idea is conveyed of embittering the streams and sources of power, wealth, support, and comfort, as has been observed, so that the great benefits of government should not be enjoyed, but all authority become despicable by weakness or mismanagement; and instead of protection and civil advantages, the people every where should languish in distress, and not know where to apply for justice or defence. Such a state of things may with great propriety be represented by the rivers and fountains of water being made bitter with wormwood. And such was the state of the Roman government from the expiration of the imperial power to the end of the gothic kingdom, *i. e.* from the year 476, to about the year 553. Nothing but civil broils, and ecclesiastical contests for power, are to be found in the history of those times, and all

all the provinces of the Roman government were in the utmost confusion and distress.

TRUMPET IV.] After this, the fourth angel sounded, “and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.”

The sun, moon and stars are very common and natural emblems of the political system. They represent the higher powers of the world, and all subordinate officers of government. The darkening of a third part of the whole, signifies a great eclipse of the glory of a kingdom. And the continuance of such darkness, both day and night, is much more than a common eclipse of one of the great luminaries, and intimates a total extinction of a third part of the light of the whole, *i. e.* a total failure of a great part of the glory of a kingdom. Therefore as these visions, in their natural series, without interruption, have led us to the overthrow of the imperial power of Rome, and shewed us the weakness and insufficiency of that remaining shadow of government under the gothic kings, viz. to about the year 553, we can hardly apply this great eclipse of all the heavenly luminaries, which seems to be of perpetual duration, without taking into our view the whole Roman empire, eastern and western, as it was in preceding times. For the great lights of the western empire were already extinguished, so that nothing of the civil form any longer remained; but the glory of the eastern empire still retained a considerable degree of splendor. And as the rest of the trumpets shew events relating to the world in general,

eral, it is by no means incongruous to suppose some general notice to be taken, in the prophecies, of the state of the eastern empire, after such a particular detail of events which issued in the destruction of the western.

When the government of Rome was entirely at an end, which once constituted one great empire, but was afterwards divided into eastern and western, it might very properly be represented as the darkening of a great part of the glory of the old Roman empire, including the eastern or constantinopolitan : For the honor and power of both the western and eastern empire, had some remaining connexion in the view of the nations. And indeed, the total destruction of the power of Rome had a great effect on the eastern empire. Powerful barbarous nations fixed their kingdoms all around, and continually encroached on the imperial territories, especially in the fertile countries bordering on the Danube, so that the splendor and power of the eastern empire suffered a very great eclipse at the very same time when the government of Rome was abolished ; and the eclipse continued, for that empire lost more and more of its ancient territories from that time.

The authority of Rome was totally and finally extinguished, when the kingdom of the Goths was demolished. About the year 536, the emperor Justinian sent Belisarius with a large army into Italy against the Goths, with a design to recover that part of the Roman power. But the consequence was, not the recovery of Rome to its pristine glory, but its being reduced to greater distress than ever, and the total dissolution of its government. In the space

space of twenty years after Belisarius came into Italy, Rome was besieged and taken five times, and the city and all its dependencies impoverished and depopulated. And when the Goths were at length subdued, and the exarchate of Ravenna was erected, Rome no longer had the honor of an imperial city, but was subject to a government entirely new. Thus all the lights of the western empire were totally extinguished, about the year 553, when Rome was reduced to the form of a small duchy. And from that time the glory of the eastern empire was greatly obscured, by having its territories more and more curtailed, while the emperors busied themselves in ecclesiastical matters, and were made dupes to an ambitious, superstitious, and litigious clergy. The darkness of these times is justly represented by a great eclipse of the sun, moon, and stars.

This scene concludes with the appearance of "an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Wo, wo, wo to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound!"

This plainly shews, that the foregoing series of prophecies, peculiarly relating to the civil empire of Rome, is finished. A pause is made as a solemn preparation for the alarming scenes which follow, relating to the world at large and a corrupt church. The angel flies through the midst of heaven; by which is not to be understood the temple of heaven, but the regions of our atmosphere: For the design was to give warning to the inhabitants of the earth, that all mankind might behold him and attend. He makes proclamation with a loud voice, that the three trumpets which yet remain will bring

as many great woes upon the inhabitants of the earth ; each of them a distinct wo ; in expectation of which the world has reason to tremble : Wo ! Wo ! Wo to the inhabitants of the earth ! The following trumpets will shew what these woes are.

S C E N E II.—CHAP. IX. 1—12.

The FIRST WO, viz.

The Rise of Mahomet, and the Armies of Saracens.

TRUMPET V.] **A**FTER the proclamation of three woes made by an angel in the foregoing scene, the fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and the first great Wo to come on the world was represented to St. John.

A star is seen falling from heaven, like a blazing meteor shooting to the ground. This star is an angel or messenger from God, sent upon an extraordinary design : For to him was given the key of the bottomless pit, that he might open the great abyfs. We have a like representation in the 20th chapter, where an angel is sent with the key of the abyfs to bind Satan and shut him up for a thousand years. Therefore the bottomless pit is the hieroglyphic of the infernal world, the prison of Satan, and the portion of wicked men. And the angel having the key given him may refer us to the words of Jesus Christ in the 18th verse of the first chapter, " I have the keys of hell and of death." Christ has all power over angels, men, and devils : And he can confine Satan to his prison, or permit him

him to go at large, and send his emissaries to do mischief among mankind, as may best answer the designs of Providence. This angel therefore is to be considered as a minister of Providence sent by Christ on this special errand.

The angel opens the bottomless pit, the mouth of which seemed to be on the surface of the earth, And immediately a thick smoke ascended out of it, like the smoke of a great furnace; so thick and black that it darkened the sun and the air. And something wonderful followed: For though the pit seemed to be all on fire, it threw up innumerable multitudes of locusts with the smoke, which spread themselves over the earth. But these locusts were of a species wholly unknown before: For they had power given them like scorpions, to give a painful and dangerous wound with a sting in their tails. They appeared nevertheless to be subject to God's orders, for they were commanded, contrary to the well known nature of locusts, not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, neither any tree, but men; and only those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads. By this order it is intimated, that this Wo is brought on christian professors, who have not the characters by which Christ's faithful people are described in the gospel; and that the sealing of God's servants in the 7th chapter, is not limited to the time when christianity first gained an establishment by Constantine, but is continued from age to age. A plain intimation is also given, that by the hieroglyphic of locusts, natural locusts are not meant, but armies of men which should spread over the world. Moreover, they were not permitted to kill men, but only to

torment them with their stings, as men are tormented with the sting of a scorpion. And their commission was to continue five months, the same space of time in which the natural locusts commonly do damage. Death was not to be the immediate effect of their stings ; yet the torment would be so great that men would wish to die rather than to live : These armies therefore were not to aim at the destruction of mankind, to gain large territories by slaughtering the former inhabitants ; but only to torment them into submission to a new religion, and new maxims of power and polity, painful to the mind.

These locusts have a farther and more extraordinary description : " They appear like horses prepared unto battle ;" which shews that martial armies are meant, who should make rapid progress through the world. They are farther described, as having on their heads some ornament resembling crowns of gold ; and " as having faces like men, hair like women, and teeth like lions." Men with turbans on their heads ornamented with gold ; hair dressed in a curious effeminate manner ; and men of great strength, courage, and fierceness in battle, will very well answer this description. Moreover, they are said " to have breastplates like breastplates of iron ;" to shew that they are well armed and defended, so as not easily to be conquered or repelled. And the sound of their wings, when they fly in such vast multitudes, is compared to the " sound of chariots of many horses running to battle." This suggests that the armies will not only be very numerous, but make rapid progress, and strike terror wherever they go by the sound of their approach. Lastly, they appear

appear to have a king over them, though natural locusts follow no leader *: But their king is the most formidable part of the vision. He is no other than the “angel of the bottomless pit,” whose name both in Hebrew and Greek is emphatically the *destroyer*. This shews it to be an army raised by the Devil’s policy and power, and led on by himself, or an emissary like him and commissioned by him, to propagate lies, and eradicate christianity.

The prophet Joel gives a description of natural locusts, which devoured the land in his time, in very strong metaphors similar to this vision. † He compares them to a numerous and formidable army, running like mighty men, defended from the sword, having teeth like lions, and devouring every thing before them as a flame of fire. Indeed in the present vision the metaphors are reversed, but with an evident allusion to that prophecy : And armies, sent out through the world as one of the most signal judgments of divine Providence, are described as locusts. But probably Joel might take occasion, from the distress brought on the land by natural locusts, to prophesy of invading armies ; and so his metaphors will perfectly agree with this vision.

It would be quite inconsistent with the observance of any order in these visions, to look for this Wo before the dissolution of the empire of Rome. The preceding visions contain all the events previous to that period in a continual series, and lead us one step beyond it, to a general view of the gloomy times which followed, from about the year 553 to the end of that century, and which afterwards continued. This first Wo has the next place in the .

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* Prov. xxx. 27.

† Joel i. 6. c hap. ii. 2—8.

the events relating to the world ; and the description itself, if well considered, will enable us to determine with great certainty what remarkable judgment on the world is here pointed out. But it may first be observed, that although the different events of the foregoing visions followed close upon one another, notice is here given of some pause before these great woes come on. The world for a time is held in expectation of the woes proclaimed by the angel, which implied judgments more terrible and distressing to the christian world than any before predicted. Therefore if it should be supposed that the effects of the fourth trumpet extend no farther than about the year 600, a considerable space may nevertheless be allowed from that time before this first Wo becomes remarkable : For only two great judgments referring to the world, in distinction from such as more peculiarly refer to the church, are predicted in these visions before the destruction of anti-christian Rome ; and they are included in a space of near 1200 years.

Now in the history of the times after the commencement of the seventh century, we find no remarkable judgment brought on the christian world, which more exactly answers to this description of the first Wo, than the appearance of Mahomet, and the great armies of Saracens, which terrified and conquered the nations with astonishing rapidity. This impostor made his appearance suddenly, coming out of a cave, in all the darkness of a new invented, confused, false religion, and with all the rage of enthusiastic frenzy. And that he might with propriety be considered as an emissary of Satan, he pretended to have had intimate converse with the angel Gabriel,
and

and to have received revelations from him ; and assumed the style of an apostle of God, sent to revive the old religion given to Adam. It may be granted that he was really inspired ; inspired by the Devil ; taught and instigated by the father of lies ; and he communicated the same spirit to his followers : Therefore he is properly represented in this vision as Satan himself. Soon after his appearance he gained a number of proselytes, by imposing on their ignorance. The people of Mecca, where he lived, endeavoured to put a stop to the imposture, and obliged him to flee to Medina for his own security, in the year 622 ; from which flight the Mahometans begin their reckoning of years. This opposition was so far from suppressing, that it was the occasion of spreading the enthusiasm every where. For from that time he taught his disciples, that his religion was not to be propagated by disputing, but by fighting. Accordingly in the year 623 he first began to rob and plunder the traders of Mecca, and beat a guard of a thousand men. After this he met with a little check ; but in the year 629 he mustered an army of ten thousand men, and brought the greatest part of Arabia under his power. The next year he turned his arms toward Syria. In the year 631 all the Arabs submitted to him ; and in the following year he died. Thus the imposture was spread in a very short time over all the adjacent regions, like a black cloud of smoke belched out from the infernal pit ; and the armies of the false apostle, like innumerable locusts thrown up in the darkness of his religion, subdued the countries all around. In the space of ten years from the time when Mahomet began to propagate his religion by arms,

arms, he had established it in a country nearly equal to all the southern kingdoms of Europe.

After Mahomet's death, his successor Abubeker, who reigned but about two years, carried the arms of the Saracens into Syria, beat the army of the Greek Emperor, and took Damascus. Omar who immediately succeeded him, and reigned ten years, drove all the Jews and Christians out of Arabia, completed the conquest of Syria, subdued Egypt and other parts of Africa, took Jerusalem, and brought the greatest part of Persia under his power. These conquests were retained and extended under Othman, to whom the whole empire of Persia submitted A. D. 651. Thus in twenty nine years, from a little number of banditti at the first appearance of Mahomet, the Saracens had taken from the Greek emperor almost all his dominions in Asia and Africa, and become exceeding numerous and terrible.

After the death of Othman, the farther progress of the Saracens was stopped for about fifty years, by great contentions about the succession; but soon after the year 700, the western parts of Europe began to experience the terror of their spreading armies. For having subdued Africa, they passed over into Spain, and in three or four years got possession of the whole of that kingdom. From thence they passed into France with an army of 400,000 men, and their wives and children, intending to fix themselves there: But after many ravages in several parts of the country, Charles Martel engaged them, gained a complete victory, and effectually stopped their farther progress, in the year 734. From that time they contented themselves with the large territories they had gained: In which they continued; except

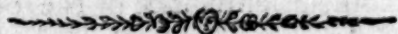
in Spain, from which, after some time, they were driven out by the successful exertions of the remaining native Spaniards.

It would be an excess of curiosity, to endeavour to find every character in this hieroglyphical vision particularly exemplified in the Saracens; but the main strokes are remarkably applicable. The Arabs wear a turban which resembles a crown or mitre. They are curious in braiding their hair. They are excellent horsemen. Their manner of invading had some resemblance of the locusts, which continue to do damage only the five warmer months: For their practice was to make sudden incursions during the summer months, and then retire until the next season. The design of their wars was not to make slaughter of mankind, but to compel them to embrace the religion of Mahomet. They did not persecute christians, and put them to death for their profession: But gave full toleration both to them and the Jews, upon their submitting to a heavy tribute; while they pursued all idolaters with the sword. The power given them in the vision is not to kill but torment men, *i. e.* the christian world: And great were the miseries which men endured under their uncontrolled despotism when compelled to submission, although their lives were spared. The injunction commonly observed when they went out to war, literally verifies that command given in the vision, not to hurt the grass, nor any green thing, neither any tree: For the order given to their armies was, "Destroy not the palm trees, nor burn any fields of corn; cut down no fruit trees; do no mischief to cattle, only such as ye kill to eat."

And

And in about five prophetic months, or 150 years, the greatest terror and fury of this Wo was past.

Before the sixth angel sounds, proclamation is again made, "that one wo is past," *i. e.* its design is completed, the world will rest for some time in its present state, and suffer no farther alarm from this wo. But notice is given, that however secure the world may appear, from any farther effects of the first wo, two more woes, equally dreadful, are to be expected.



S C E N E III.—C H A P. IX. 13—21.

The Power of the Turkish Armies, predicted by the Sixth Trumpet.

TRUMPET VI.] AFTER a proper interval of time the "sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and a voice came from the four horns of the golden altar before God." This voice is said to proceed from the altar of incense, to give an intimation that this wo was to be brought on the christian world in consequence of the prayers of the afflicted saints, that God might take vengeance on the enemies of true religion. By this voice the angel who sounded the trumpet is commanded "to loose the four angels which were bound in the great river Euphrates. Accordingly, the four angels were loosed, who are said to be "prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men." Upon this, an astonishing army of horsemen appeared, and St. John heard a declaration of the number of this army, a number never known in any other

other army in the world, no less than two hundred millions. The riders and their horses made a most surprising and terrible appearance ; for they had " breastplates like fire blazing with brimstone, mixed with jacinth, or hyacinth," which is blue, *i. e.* they appeared red and yellow mixed with blue flame. Their horses had " heads like lions, and out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone ;" so that as they went forward the third part of men were killed only by their infernal breath. They had also a very strange power in their tails as well as their mouths ; for their tails were like serpents, as if every hair of their tail was a serpent ; and the hairs had heads, and with them they did great hurt. After this description, the design of this wo is plainly intimated, viz. to punish the christian world for their idolatries, murders, forceries, fornications, and thefts, that they might repent and be reformed.

This wo is most evidently distinct from the foregoing. The former is declared to be past before this comes : It is brought on by another trumpet ; and it has a very different description.

It is very strange that Mr. Lowman, who has written with so much learning and judgment on many parts of this book, and with whom we have hitherto generally agreed, should here be chargeable with so great a mistake as to blend the vision under this sixth trumpet, with that under the fifth, and make them both point at the armies of Saracens. By this he reduces two great woes to but one ; and without sufficient reason departs from the application which the learned and judicious Mr. Mede, and others, have made of this wo to the rise and progress of the Turks. The only reason given by

by Mr. Lowman for rejecting Mr. Mede's opinion is, as he says, because "the rise of the Ottoman empire is so low, that it is by far too great a step from A. D. 665, in which the former prophecy ended : For Othoman, the founder of that empire, died in the year of the Hegira 727, A. D. 1326. This time will farther also fall far into the time of the next period of prophecy." His mistake therefore is entirely owing to an attachment to his particular method of dividing the whole prophecy into seven periods, regularly and uninterruptedly succeeding each other. If he had considered, that different views are given, in this book, of the very same periods ; some of the visions representing the state of the world at large unto the fall of antichrist's kingdom ; some shewing the state of the church more peculiarly, from its first and purest state through the darkest and most corrupt times ; some particularly exhibiting the rise of antichrist ; and some the several peculiar plagues which should precede the destruction of that blasphemous power ; he would not have been so perplexed and misled by endeavouring to make every vision coincide exactly with his periods. The right view of these prophecies is this, that the events which have more immediate relation to the civil empire of Rome, and the world at large, are first exhibited, through the whole series, to the destruction of the beast or antichrist's empire ; and then the events peculiar to the church are made known at different periods, and in different views. From the total dissolution of the civil empire, the prophecy hastens through the remaining events respecting the world at large, and comprehends them in two great woes, the armies

mies of Saracens, and the power of the Turks, which reach to the times of the seventh trumpet, and the third wo, when great Babylon, or antichristian Rome, is to fall ; and it is quite unnecessary to suppose the second wo follows close after the first, as to the time. After this general view of the affairs of the world through several ages ; the prophecies peculiarly relating to the church begin.

It is most evident that the third and last wo remains to be declared. But the series is broken off after the second wo ; and a new division of the prophecy begins in the next chapter.

Now it appears by the representation of the second wo, that it consists of a vast army of horsemen, proceeding from the river Euphrates. That they carry terror and destruction wherever they go, and march on with irresistible rage until they have destroyed a third part, or a large number of mankind. By having tails like serpents, it may be intimated, that after they have passed through a country and subdued it, they will greatly afflict men, in a manner resembling the stings under the former wo. And by the declaration made in the conclusion, that this judgment had not the designed effect ; that men did not repent of their idolatrous worship and other enormous crimes ; it appears to be sent on the christian world for its degeneracy into all the vices of the heathen.

The irruption of the Turks into Europe well corresponds to all that is said of this second wo. This people came originally from the country bordering on the Caspian sea. They were hired, as hardy soldiers, by the Sultan of Persia, against the Calif of Babylon, who was then head of the Saracen

cen empire, A. D. 832. By their help the Sultan gained the victory over the Calif. But when the war was over, he refused to reward them according to agreement : Therefore they attacked the Sultan, drove him out of his kingdom, and seated themselves in his dominions. From that time they gradually gained strength, and became a considerable nation : And that they might be more secure in their settlement, they made peace with the Calif of Babylon, and embraced the mahometan religion. Thus they continued increasing in strength, and adding to their territories, until the year 1051 ; when they demanded and obtained liberty of the Calif of the Saracens, to set up an emperor of their own in their Asiatic territories. Soon after this, they divided themselves into four Sultanies, all bordering on the river Euphrates, which continued many years. But for a long time they were restrained by divine Providence from extending their territories, though they desired and often attempted it. They were confined within their bounds more especially by the crusades, or expeditions of the European christians to the holy land. As soon as the crusades were over, which continued near two hundred years, the Tartars from beyond the Caspian sea broke into Asia, fought many battles with the Turks, and drove them out of the greater part of their dominions.

But about A. D. 1300, the Turks, under Othoman their chief, collected their scattered strength, freed themselves from the yoke of the Tartars, took the kingdom of Egypt from the Saracens, and in about twenty eight years after carried their conquests even to the Euxine sea. Thus the restraint, which divine Providence for a long time had laid upon them,

them, was taken off, and the armies of the four angels, or sultans, were let loose. Orchanus, the son of Othoman, took a great part of the Greek emperor's dominions in the lesser Asia. After him Amurath, about the year 1363, having carried the Turkish arms to the very borders of Constantinople, passed the Hellespont into Europe with sixty thousand men, took several places of importance, beat the emperor's army sent to oppose him, and then returned with his plunder. This was the first irruption of the Turks into Europe. His son Bajazet succeeded him; who carried his arms even to the borders of Hungary, made great slaughter of the christian armies which opposed him, and at length returned with many captives, and abundance of spoil. After this he went over into Europe again, laid siege to the imperial city Constantinople, and continued the siege eight years; and would then have taken it, if the French king had not sent a powerful army for its relief. But Bajazet marched against this army, entirely defeated it, and returned to the siege, which he continued two years longer. At length hearing that Tamerlane with a great body of Tartars had invaded his dominions, he was obliged to raise the siege; and afterwards his army was defeated by Tamerlane, and he himself being taken prisoner, finished his days with vexation. This for a considerable length of time put a stop to the progress of the Turkish arms in Europe.

But about the year 1410, Mahomet the first, having united under him all the petty kingdoms into which the Turks had been divided, resumed the expedition into Europe, and after several successful battles, fixed his court at Adrianople. After him

Amurath the second carried on these conquests, and penetrated far into Greece. But his successor, Mahomet the second, completed the destruction of the Greek empire, by taking Constantinople A. D. 1453: And it is said the siege of this city was the first in which gunpowder and cannon were used: Which perhaps may be hinted at in the vision by the fire, and smoke, and brimstone issuing out of the mouths of the horses.

In the history of the Turks we have a striking illustration of this wo in almost every circumstance. They came from the Euphrates. They were a long time confined to their own territories under four sultans. At length their restraint was taken off, and they began to appear numerous and formidable, and to make very considerable conquests. They took possession of Asia minor, and became a terror to Constantinople. They passed over into Europe by repeated incursions, and gained ground more and more; at length their power was irresistible, and they took the capital city Constantinople, and got possession of all the Greek empire. From that time, for more than a century and an half, they were the terror and severest wo to Europe, the whole of which was threatened by their invincible arms. Their armies consisted chiefly of horsemen, and breathed slaughter wherever they went; for their principal dependence was upon cavalry, and they seldom appeared in the field under 300,000 horse and 60,000 foot. They pressed on to new victories and conquests with the courage and fierceness of lions, and with breasts burning with the infernal fire of the wildest enthusiasm, while they propagated a false religion by fire and sword.

Like

Like the Saracens they have subdued a great part of the world by their arms : Like them they have spread the mahometan imposture ; and like them have tormented those whom their arms have spared with all the evils of most absolute despotism, which may be signified by the snakes of their tails. Their dominions in Europe now include a great extent of country, and they still remain very powerful, though evidently on the decline.

The time fixed for the duration of this wo requires particular attention. These angels of divine vengeance are said to be “ prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, to slay the third part of men.” The time for the continuance of the first wo, was five months ; which, being an allusion to the season in which the natural locusts devour the fields, might be interpreted in a more lax manner, as not denoting a precise time : And yet, if we take a day for a year, according to the prophetic manner of reckoning, five months will make 150 years ; and this was very nearly the time of the alarming and victorious progress of the Saracens, after which they kept within their own dominions. But the time assigned for the duration of this second wo, has no such allusion ; but is expressed as if something determinate were intended. The great difficulty here is, to account for the breaking of the time into so many parts, and especially for the mention of an hour in the reckoning. This has embarrassed those who think the several numbers are to be added into one sum. Others therefore reject that method, and are content to take the time only in a general sense, viz. that these angels are prepared to execute their commission upon any occasion or warning ;

or that the incursions of these destroyers should be under a limitation, like the inroads of an enemy who in a short time are beaten back, or at a set time will retire of themselves. But if we strictly attend to the different times expressed, we may be led to suppose some of the times are used in a more lax sense, but that by a year is intended a determinate time; and that the numbers are not to be summed up together. It seems to be the design of this division of times, that a pause of thought should be made between each, as if written thus, "which were prepared for an hour,—and a day,—and a month,—and a year, for to slay the third part of men." And it may be understood in this manner, that their arms should not be pushed on at once, by sudden and continued force, and an uninterrupted train of victories; but there should be considerable intervals betwixt their incursions. At first their power would give but a short alarm, like the fears of an hour. After some intermission they would rise to greater and more threatening power; yet the terror of their arms would again abate, as if the danger were only for a day, and all would return to a state of quietness again. Then again, after some interval, they should appear with more strength, carry on longer wars, and for a month, *i. e.* for thirty years or a considerable length of time, continue to threaten and distress the world by their arms. Yet this great alarm should die away, as if deliverance from the danger might at length be expected. But finally they should again make the most formidable attacks, rush on irresistibly, establish an empire, proceed in their conquests, and continue a year, or in the prophetic reckoning of a day for a year, 360 years.

All

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All this appears true in fact, according to the foregoing view of their history. Their first irruption into Europe was chiefly for plunder, and they soon retired ; so that this may be called an alarm for an hour. Bajazet afterwards made another incursion for plunder and returned : But went over to Europe again, pushed the war with great power, and threatened the speedy conquest of the Greek empire ; but he was called off to meet the Tartars, and his day was over. But after a considerable interval of rest to Europe, Mahomet the first renewed the war and took Adrianople, and his successor carried on the conquests, until the Turks had gained a considerable part of Greece ; and with respect to this invasion, by which they obtained longer and firmer footing in the empire, it was an alarm which continued a month, or thirty years. Finally after the Turkish power had seemed for a while to be circumscribed by their last bounds, Mahomet the second took Constantinople and established the Turkish empire upon the ruins of that of the Greeks, which is to continue a year, *i. e.* 360 years, from that time. If the foregoing is the true method of interpretation, the period of that empire in its present form, is not far off : But we must wait for the events of divine Providence.

The special design of this wo is declared in the conclusion of the chapter. It was to punish the christian world for idolatry, murders, forceries or bewitching arts to deceive men into the belief of a lying religion, and other heathenish crimes. It is well known that the western church had for a long time established the worship of images in imitation of the ancient heathen, and perverted christianity

to countenance all manner of superstition, and falsehood, and every vice which usually accompanies idolatry. The Greek church also, though it had never admitted gross idolatry, had nevertheless very far degenerated into ignorance, superstition, and all such wickedness as is provoking to Heaven. This wo therefore was designed as a judgment on professors of both churches. But it hath not produced the desired effect in bringing them to repentance and reformation. The force of this wo is now abated, but it is not yet at an end. And after this we are warned to expect the third wo soon to follow.

S C E N E IV.—CHAP. X.

Jesus Christ appears with a little Book in his Hand. Seven Thunders add great Solemnity to the Scene. Christ then declares with a solemn Oath, that the Time shall not be prolonged, or shall not be yet. St. John is commanded to take and eat the Book; and thus is prepared to prophesy again before many People, and Nations, and Tongues, and Kings.

IN this scene another mighty angel comes down from heaven in great majesty and glory. "He is clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow encircles his head. His face shines as the sun; and his feet are as pillars of fire." This can be no other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself; who went before the camp of Israel in a cloud; and after his resurrection ascended to heaven in a cloud; and will come again in the clouds of heaven at the last day. The rainbow round his head is a farther evidence that this is Christ. In the 4th chapter a rainbow

rainbow adorns the throne of God. In Ezekiel's vision of the divine Majesty, he that sat on the throne had a rainbow around him. A rainbow was the token of God's covenant of peace with Noah and his posterity. And Christ has made peace between God and man, and in him the new covenant is established. The rest of the description so perfectly agrees with Christ's appearance in the first chapter, that there can be no doubt that this is the same person.

"He has in his hand a little book open." This is the same book which he took out of the hand of the supreme Majesty, that he might open the seals. Six covers, which were rolled over it, have been taken off, and their contents made known; and now the inner roll, of a smaller size, appears. The seal of this is already broken, as in the beginning of the 8th chapter, and therefore the book now appears open in Christ's hand. Some things preparatory to the principal prophecies have been declared by the sounding of six trumpets: But many great events are yet to be made known.

This mighty angel "set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth." This aggrandizes his person above all human conception. He treads on the waters of the ocean, and on the firm land, and has the whole terraqueous globe under his power.

He then "cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth:" For he is called the lion of the tribe of Judah; and his word is accompanied with majesty, power, and terror. "And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices." The thunders on mount Sinai, when God came down to give the

law, proclaimed the divine Majesty there ; and these thunders may be considered only as attestations to the honor of this glorious person, or as signals to command the attention of the world : But the thunders uttered articulate sounds, perhaps to give St. John some general intimations of the things which remained to be revealed. St. John heard what they uttered, but by a voice from heaven he was forbidden to write what he heard, and therefore all curious inquiry is prevented.

The angel, after this, lifted up his hand to heaven, and with a most solemn oath, expressed by a recital of the power of the great Creator, "sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer ;" or, as our translation may be corrected, that *the time shall not be prolonged* ; or otherwise, that *the time shall not be yet*. Both these translations are capable of a consistent signification. It cannot mean that all time should immediately be at an end ; For much remained to be revealed and done before the end of the world. But as the sixth trumpet had declared the second great wo upon the world, and but one more remained before God would deliver the church out of its troubles ; pious christians might be led to think the time of the last wo long delayed, while so great a variety of events were to be represented, before the prophecy shews the end of these troubles. Before the effects of the seventh trumpet could be clearly made known, it was necessary to prepare the way ; by shewing the state of the church through many ages of darkness

ness and corruption, and even from the beginning of christianity ; and by declaring a series of particular judgments to be brought on the apostatised church, previous to its destruction. God's faithful people, mourning under long and severe trials, might think their deliverance at a discouraging distance, if so many prophecies must intervene before the end of their afflictions is brought into view. Therefore Christ here declares, "*the time shall not be prolonged*:" But after the second wo had accomplished the design, "the seventh angel should sound, and the mystery of God should be finished, and all the deep purposes of Providence relating to the deliverance and happiness of his church should be completed, according to what he hath spoken by all the prophets."

If we read the text—" *the time shall not be yet*"—it may be understood as a check to an impatient expectation of hearing what the third wo should be, and when it should come and put an end to the afflictions of the saints, since they had been led so near to it by the revelations already made. Through an earnest expectation of deliverance from their troubles, they might not allow in their own minds a sufficient interval between the two last woes. It is therefore declared—" *the time shall not be yet*"—but they must wait some time longer for the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

It is an easier construction to read the text, *the time shall not be prolonged* ; and this very nearly agrees with the common translation, and naturally falls in with that very brief view of the effects of the seventh trumpet, and the accomplishment of God's merciful designs toward his true church, which is given in the next chapter.

The

The "mystery of God which is to be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets," is that which Daniel speaks of, viz. " * the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which smote the image of the four monarchies upon its feet, and broke it in pieces : Which stone became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Or in other words, it is that kingdom of which Daniel writes in another prophecy—" † I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him : His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." In plain language, the mystery which remained to be finished was, the destruction of all the enemies of the faithful church, and the universal prevalence of Christ's kingdom through the world.

When the angel had sworn this solemn oath, St. John was called by a voice from heaven, to " go and take the little book which was open in the hand of the angel." And he took it, and according to command eat it up ; and found it sweet as honey in his mouth, but bitter in his belly. This alludes to Ezekiel's vision *, where he is commanded in the same manner, to take and eat the roll of a book, in which were written lamentations, and mourning, and wo : This was in his mouth as honey for sweetness. The meaning of both is, that the prophet

was,

* Dan. ii. 34, 35. 44, 45. † Dan. vii. 13, 14.

‡ Ezekiel ii. 8—end, and chap. iii. beginning.

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was to receive deeply, into his mind and heart, the things which God revealed, and which were to be delivered to the church : And that the prophecies, as the faithful word of God, designed for the benefit of his church, gave great pleasure to the prophet ; but as containing many melancholy circumstances of the church, and denunciations of judgments upon it, when he meditated on them they occasioned much grief and sorrow of heart.

The special reason given, why John is commanded to take and eat the book is this—" Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." By receiving and digesting well in his mind what was contained in that book, he was to be prepared to prophesy of the many wonderful events contained in it, and to publish them for the benefit of all nations through every age of the world.

As John was required in such an uncommon manner to qualify himself for the remaining prophecies, it gives a plain intimation, that he is now come to the most important part of the revelation which was to be made, contained in the principal book which was rolled up within the six covers. The outer rolls declared more generally the great changes and calamities to be brought on the civil empire of Rome, and the world at large ; and it was sufficient for John to observe what was exhibited at the opening of each seal, and record what he saw just as things appeared, without digesting them in his mind by so attentive meditations. But this last small roll, besides a continuation of some prophecies begun in the former, according to their order, which ends with the Turkish wo ; contains, in various

rious views, a very particular account of the state of the church even from the beginning of christianity, through the long period of the great apostasy, unto its deliverance from antichristian tyranny, and advancement to a prosperous state on earth, and to future glory and perfect felicity in heaven. It is therefore evident that the prophecies peculiarly relating to the church here begin.

SCENE V.—CHAP. XI.

A general View of the Profanation of the Church, under the Reign of Antichrist, and the afflicted State of the true Worshipers of GOD through a long Period of Twelve Hundred and Sixty Years. The Care taken by Providence to continue a sufficient Number of Witnesses to the Truth through all that mournful Period. The Efforts of their Enemies to destroy them, and a Triumph over the Witnesses as slain. The miraculous Resurrection of the Witnesses, and Ascension into Heaven. The consequent Shock given to the Capital of Antichrist's Empire; and the Introduction of Christ's universal Kingdom on Earth, by the sounding of the seventh Trumpet, which brings the third Wo, and destroys the Empire of Antichrist.

IF we take particular notice of the latter part of this chapter, it will appear, that from the 14th verse it is connected with the end of the 9th chapter, and is a continuation of the general prophecies of the events of the world; but hastening on to the final issue of them, and omitting all intervening particulars which were to be represented in the following visions: And thus the series of general prophecies concludes with this chapter. Yet it was necessary to give a representation of the church

church in its corrupt state, and the afflictions of the little remnant of saints, before the conclusion of the general series ; because otherwise the effects of the seventh trumpet, which still remains to be sounded, could not so well be understood, the last two bringing destruction on that apostate church. Therefore a view of the church in its corrupt state is inserted in the general prophecy, between the second and third woes, in figures taken from the jewish temple ; and the remnant of God's servants is spoken of in metaphors borrowed from the Old Testament.

St. John had a measuring reed given him, with orders to "measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein," but "to leave out the court, and not measure it, because it was given to the Gentiles to be profanely trampled under foot, for the space of forty and two months."

By the temple is plainly meant the christian church, consisting of all that have the name of christians : Of this church the jewish temple was a type ; therefore St. Paul useth this metaphor in speaking to the church of Corinth—"Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The jewish temple consisted not only of the sacred building itself, which was but of very moderate dimensions, but of the courts and buildings annexed to it. It had two courts, an inner and an outer ; of which the inner adjoined to the door of the sacred building, and was appropriated to the priests, where stood the altar of burnt offerings ; the outer court was for the whole congregation of Israel, where they stood to worship,

worship, not being permitted to go into the court of the priests but on special occasions. In the second temple another court was added on the outside of the other, called the court of the Gentiles, appropriated to strangers, and considered as in no other view holy than as part of the holy city Jerusalem. To that temple the christian church may with propriety be compared. It is like a sacred building with a large inclosure, in which God has promised his peculiar presence, and which includes all who profess the name of Christ. Christ is the altar and the sacrifice, and through him christians draw near to God. Sincere believers are called by St. Peter, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;" and therefore in this vision they are considered as true worshippers and priests belonging to the inner court. But common professors, whose hearts and lives are not influenced by the gospel, are considered only as worshippers in the outer court; favored indeed with great privileges above the rest of the world, but not acknowledged in the view of God among his sanctified and sealed people.

In this view of the church, the meaning of the order given to measure the temple, and the altar, and them that worship therein, may easily be understood. St. John was to measure the inner court, because it contained none but such as worshipped in spirit and in truth, whom God would keep, distinct from all the rest, under his special care, as being conformed to the perfect rule and measure of his word. But the outer court he was not to measure, because it was filled with worshippers who could

could not stand a test by the divine rule; they were therefore to be left out in common with the world. But there is a very special reason given for not measuring this court, which has particular respect to the great apostasy of the church, viz. because it was given to the Gentiles to be profaned, *i. e.* to christians resembling the heathen in idolatry and vice, guilty of every abomination by which the christian profession is profaned. Such christians were to have possession of all the outward inclosures of the church, and defile them with all manner of wickedness. This is an allusion to our Savior's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans—" * Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."—In these words our Lord gives an intimation that the temple should not always remain polluted, but only during that time in which God for wise purposes had given the Gentiles liberty to profane it; but at the appointed season, when divine judgments had completed their design, the Gentiles themselves should become God's people, and it should be cleansed. So in this vision, there is not only some general encouragement that the christian profession should not forever be profaned, but a precise time is fixed for the continuance of this profanation, viz. forty two months.

It would be very unreasonable, and inconsistent with the design and tenor of these prophecies, to take these forty two months simply, according to our common reckoning of time. Events which are to continue but three years and an half in common reckoning, however remarkable, can hardly be supposed to be noticed in a prophecy which comprehends

* Luke xxi, 24,

hends in a general view, the events of all succeeding ages unto the end of the world. So short a time is like the least island in a small map of the world, which becomes a point not visible, of whatever note it may be among navigators. Moreover, it will appear, as we go on through this book, that many and very remarkable things are to be accomplished in the course of Providence during this very time, which cannot be included in so short a space as three and an half natural years. God himself hath shewed us that he sometimes useth, in his reckoning, a day for a year. As, when he doomed the Israelites to wander forty years in the wilderness, God says—" * After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days (each day for a year) shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years."—So when Ezekiel was ordered to lie on his side forty days, as a sign to the people, God says—"† I have given thee a day for a year." Especially in Daniel's prophecy of the time of the Messiah's coming, this same way of reckoning is plainly exemplified; that time is fixed at seventy weeks‡, which make four hundred and ninety days, *i. e.* years; for just so many years passed before the Messiah appeared. And protestant divines are generally agreed that this is the method of reckoning in this prophetic book, therefore it is unnecessary to enlarge farther on this point.

During this same time, "power is given to God's two witnesses to prophesy, clothed in sackcloth." The time is repeated in days instead of months, a month being accounted thirty days, and so a year reckoned three hundred and sixty days. They are

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* Numb. xiv. 34.

† Ezek. iv. 6.

‡ Dan. ix. 24.

to prophesy twelve hundred and sixty days, *i. e.* three years and an half, the same with forty two months, and reckoning each day for a year their time is twelve hundred and sixty years.

By these two witnesses we cannot understand two single persons, for how could any two men continue so long a time. Many needless, vague, and groundless conjectures have been made on this supposition, that two persons of eminent note must be found, who have borne testimony to the truth. Some have thought two churches are meant, famous for their adherence to the doctrines of Christ. Some have supposed the two Testaments to be intended, as the word of God is continually testifying the truth against all corruptions of christianity; but it would be using unnatural figures to say these were slain toward the end of their testimony, and their dead bodies remained unburied in the street. The easiest and most natural interpretation is, that by two witnesses this precise number is not intended, but in general a sufficient number: That as two is the common number of witnesses necessary to give evidence to the truth, God would take care, that, through the whole time of the profanation of the outer court, there should be a number of faithful witnesses to testify the truth in opposition to all the corruptions of christianity, so that the pure gospel should not be wholly lost. And bishop Newton, in his excellent dissertation on the prophecies, has proved by many historical evidences, that from the first establishment of Popery down to the reformation, some true and faithful witnesses of Christ appeared in opposition to antichristian corruptions.

These two witnesses are said to prophesy in sackcloth; to signify that they should all that time be

in a mournful and afflicted state, and suffer persecution for their testimony. They are called "the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." This has reference to Zerubbabel and Joshua, who are represented*, as two olive trees on each side of the candlestick, which empty oil out of themselves through two golden pipes ; which signifies that those two conspicuous persons should be furnished with all supplies of grace from God to reestablish the worship of the temple, and continue the light of the Jewish church. And thus the witnesses of the truth should be furnished by Christ with wisdom, and every gift of divine grace, and continually communicate light to the church in the midst of the darkness of the times of apostasy, that the truth of the gospel might not be wholly extinguished ; and by their testimony the church should at length be restored to a state of light and purity.

The power given to these witnesses is very wonderful : For if any man attempts to hurt them, "fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies." As the prophet Elijah by his word brought down fire from heaven, and consumed two companies of soldiers who came to take him : And as God promised to make his word in the mouth of Jeremiah fire, and the people who opposed him wood : So a like power is given to the witnesses. When they pray that God would avenge them of their enemies, he will grant their prayer. When they denounce the threatenings of his word against idolaters, persecutors, and other notorious sinners, God will manifest the fiery indignation which he
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* Zech. iv. 11, 12.

has threatened. Heaven from time to time will interpose to preserve them from being wholly cut off or silenced. Moreover, like Elijah, "they have power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy;" and like Moses and Aaron "they have power over the waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will;" *i. e.* their prayers shall sometimes have even miraculous effects, as often as the cause of God requires extraordinary manifestations of his presence with them.

While they are completing their testimony, and when the assigned period draws nigh for putting an end to their mournful state, "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war with them, and shall overcome them, and kill them, and their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

Our translation says, "When they shall have finished their testimony"—as if the witnesses were not to suffer or be slain until they had entirely completed their testimony; but the Greek words are not so determinate: They rather justify the foregoing interpretation, and comprehend the whole time, though especially referring to the latter part of their testimony. Through the whole time their enemies shall oppose them with great malice: But when the time draws nigh for finishing their testimony, open war is to be made upon them by the beast which ascended out of the bottomless pit.

Of this beast no mention has been made before; but we find a beast ascending out of the earth in the 13th chapter; and the same is mentioned again,

in the 17th chapter, as ascending out of the bottomless pit ; and again, in the 19th chapter, he is represented as taken and cast alive into the lake of fire ; and we shall find an explication in other visions, which will evidently shew it to be the antichristian or papal empire. And therefore what is here said of the beast's making war with the witnesses, and slaying them may be understood thus—That the antichristian powers, provoked by the constant testimony borne against a corrupt church by a little number of witnesses, and finding all other methods ineffectual to silence them, will make war upon them, and proceed against them with the most violent rage, and be permitted at length to conquer and slay them, so that all witnesses to the truth will seem to be wholly suppressed.—By their “ dead bodies lying in the street of the great city, spiritually, or mystically, called Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was crucified,” we may understand in general, that the slaughter of the witnesses should be a fact done in the view of the world, and not like many private murders, be kept concealed by every artful method : It should be known and applauded by all the vassals of antichrist, and openly avowed as a notable instance of his power and vengeance against his opposers. As to the great city mentioned under the figurative names of Sodom and Egypt, and compared also to Jerusalem where our Lord was crucified, we shall find by following visions that Rome with its empire is meant. It is called Sodom, on account of the abominable crimes committed in it ; Egypt, on account of abounding superstition and idolatry, and the cruel bondage in which it holds the people of God : And it is compared

pared to Jerusalem, being said to be the city where our Lord was crucified ; because, while it pretended to be an holy city, it had killed the prophets and saints, and crucified Christ afresh in his members. Here it may be more especially observed, that as, in the beginning of the chapter, the temple is the emblem of the christian church, that city with its empire in which the church is comprehended, may very properly be compared to Jerusalem, the city in which the jewish temple stood : And as our Lord was crucified within the jurisdiction of the Roman empire, and by the Roman authority, and the papal empire has succeeded to the other, and claims an equal extent, there is a propriety in saying that our Lord was crucified in the great city Rome, considered in connexion with the empire of which it is the capital.

The dead bodies of the witnesses are said to lie unburied in the street of the great city, *i. e.* in the public places of the empire or countries belonging to it, in the view of all nations and languages. The nations would not suffer them to be buried, but with great triumph celebrated the glorious victory obtained over those who had tormented them by their testimony. By this denial of burial they expressed their extreme rancour against the witnesses : They were highly gratified with this triumph over their dead bodies, as long as they could be kept in view without putrefaction. But this may also be designed as an intimation that the antichristian powers would prohibit christian burial to such as they call heretics. And it may also signify, that divine Providence would not suffer the enemies of truth to complete their victory, so far as to secure them-

selves against all possibility of the revival of the witnesses.

“After three days and an half the witnesses miraculously revived, arose, and stood on their feet in the presence of their enemies, to the terror of the numerous spectators : And a voice from heaven commanded them to come up ; and they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, in the view of their enemies.” To take all this literally would be inconsistent with the observation before made, that the witnesses are not two persons, but a succession of faithful men ; and that they were slain, when the anti-christian powers supposed they had wholly suppressed and slain all that dared to testify against the corruptions of the church. Therefore their surprising resurrection must be understood metaphorically, as signifying that new witnesses should unexpectedly rise up, with the same spirit, to maintain the truth of the gospel. And their ascension into heaven in a cloud, is a figurative representation of their being taken under God’s peculiar protection, encompassed with evident tokens of his presence and power, and advanced above the reach of the malice of their persecutors as effectually as if they were taken up in a cloud to heaven, where their enemies might behold them, without having power to do them the least injury. This seems to have some reference to Christ’s resurrection and ascension into heaven, which defeated the malice of the Jews against his person, and was the complete confirmation of his claim of the character of the Son of God, as also the powerful means of spreading the gospel through the world. So the true doctrines of Christ in the mouths of faithful witnesses should be revived,

ed, and supported by the remarkable interposition of heaven, and prevail above all opposition.

At the same time, when the witnesses ascended into heaven, there “was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand : And the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.” The words—“*were slain of men seven thousand*”—may be more strictly translated from the Greek thus—*were slain seven thousand names of men*—*i. e.* men of name and renown. An earthquake in these prophecies signifies great commotions in the kingdoms of the world, or in the state of religion, and great revolutions consequent. So here when the witnesses rise again and are taken up to heaven, the great city, *i. e.* Rome, including its extensive dominions, felt a great shock, and a tenth part of it fell, and many men of renown were slain ; perhaps not literally, but by the power of that gospel which gave the shock ; *i. e.* were conquered by the truth, their enmity to it being slain : And the remnant were constrained to acknowledge the almighty hand of God against them.

Some expositors have supposed this earthquake to be the same with that mentioned in the 16th chapter, and that it refers to the same event, viz. the final overthrow of antichristian Rome. But whoever compares them, and considers that this earthquake comes in the time of the second wo, and shakes down only a tenth part of the city ; and that the other is the third wo, which splits the city into three parts, and wholly destroys and sinks it ; must see a manifest distinction between the one and the other. The slaying of the witnesses, their resurrec-

tion, and the earthquake which shakes down a tenth part of the city, are plainly events which take place before the second wo is finished, *i. e.* before the power of the Turks is at an end, as it has been explained. A tenth part of the city, may be taken generally for a small proportion; or more probably it is an allusion to the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided at the same time when the second beast began to appear, which are mentioned in the 17th chapter. And by this it appears, that there is a very slender foundation for the opinion of some divines, who look for the slaying of the witnesses just before the complete overthrow of the great city; and so expect a most terrible persecution yet to come on, when protestants every where will be so entirely destroyed, that their enemies will be ready to glory that none are left. The slaying of the witnesses, and the earthquake which breaks off a part of the ten kingdoms from Rome, are events already past, under the second wo. The turkish empire, which is the second wo, was established in Europe about the middle of the fifteenth century, and was in full force during the 16th century. And in the beginning of that century the protestant reformation took place, and Rome felt an amazing shock, which broke off from her a considerable part of her dominions. All circumstances of the history of those times perfectly agree with this part of the prophecy.

As a sufficient number of witnesses to the pure gospel were continued by divine Providence, from age to age, in the midst of the papal apostasy; so especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Waldenses and Albigenes boldly maintained the

the true doctrines of christianity, notwithstanding all the common methods of personal persecution. The pope was greatly alarmed at the prevalence of their opinions, and at length made war upon these witnesses in a literal sense. An army of cross bearers was raised and sent against them, which took their cities, slaughtered without mercy multitudes of the inhabitants, and endeavoured to root them out from all places. Those who escaped the general slaughter were dispersed through several countries; but this remainder was pursued by new methods of persecution devised and established in the twelfth century by the council of Lateran, especially by the courts of inquisition set up at that time. John Hus and Jerom of Prague were the two last martyrs of eminence in the cause of christian truth, who were burnt in the year 1414, by order of the council of Constance, and agreeably to a bull of Pope Martin the Vth, of the following tenor—"We will and command, that, by this our authority apostolical, ye exhort and admonish all the professors of the catholic faith, as emperors, kings, dukes, princes, &c. that they expel out of their kingdoms, provinces, cities, towns, &c. all and all manner of heretics, according to the effect and tenor of the council of Lateran.—That they suffer none such within their shires, or circuits, to preach or to keep either house or family, either yet to use any handicraft or occupation, or other trades of merchandize, or else to solace themselves any ways, or frequent the company of christian men. And furthermore, if such public and known heretics shall chance to die (although not so denounced by the church) yet in this so great a crime, let him and them want
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christian burial.—The residue let the aforesaid temporal lords, &c. take among them with condign deaths, without any delay, to punish*.” After this all opposition to papal corruptions languished, and the enemies of truth triumphed as having obtained a complete victory, and slain all heretics. And for about an hundred years all remained quiet, and the Popes carried their antichristian power higher and higher, without opposition, until by the scandal of vending indulgences for all manner of sins, with shocking impudence, Martin Luther was provoked to preach against them, in the year 1517. Upon this a cloud of witnesses rose up, and boldly testified against all the corruptions of the romish church. Thus the witnesses revived in a wonderful manner, and were protected by some of those civil powers which had been under the dominion of Rome. Heaven raised them above the reach of their enemies, the truth prevailed, and a surprising reformation took place in Germany, England, and other countries in Europe. Rome felt such a metaphorical earthquake as filled her and her dependencies with terror; thousands of famous men fell from her; and a tenth part of her dominions was rent off. This is so plain a fulfilment of this part of the prophecy that the application will not admit a reasonable doubt.

After this earthquake, the series of the former visions is resumed, and the connexion with the 9th chapter restored, by a declaration, that “the second wo is past, and behold the third wo cometh quickly.” Here it may be observed, that the second wo is said to be passed, not because it was entirely removed, but

* Fox, Acts and Monum. Vol. I. p. 738.

but because the distressing and destructive effects of it were over. The wo of the Saracen Empire was not wholly past, for the Saracens still held large territories, when the Turks began to be formidable. So the Turks still retain their establishment in Europe, and have great power : But their arms have made little progress since the protestant religion has gained so firm footing ; and the terror of this wo is chiefly over. Therefore the third wo may soon be expected.

The former woes were brought on by the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets, and therefore the seventh trumpet which is immediately sounded brings the third wo. The seventh trumpet sounded, and “ there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ ; and he shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give the thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come ; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great ; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.” Here is an anticipation of the happy state of the church after its troubles ; that the saints might be comforted with a view of the happy issue of their trials, while divine Providence was taking the steps preparatory to their deliverance. Many events were still to intervene

tervene before Christ's kingdom should be universally established. The metropolis of Antichrist's kingdom was to have a dreadful overthrow ; and a great battle was to be fought with the beast and his armies, represented in the 19th chapter : But the faith and hope of the saints is here transported beyond these, that they may have a prelibation of the joys of their future triumph.

The prophecy hastens to finish the general series, which, beginning soon after John's time, is continued to the establishment of Christ's kingdom : And therefore as it concludes with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the particular events are only hinted at, being reserved for following visions ; but the happy times of the church which are finally to come on, are represented in this song of praise.

There is in this song a general imitation of great judgments to be executed. That the nations had in great wrath persecuted the prophets, and saints, and all that feared God, both small and great ; but now the day of divine wrath is come, and the time when God will judge the cause of all the dead that have suffered martyrdom for the truth, and will destroy them that have cruelly destroyed such multitudes of good men from the earth. For when it is said, " the time of the dead is come that they should be judged," we are not to understand it of the judgment of the last day, but of the execution of divine justice on account of God's servants which had been slain. He would judge them by punishing their enemies with destruction, and rewarding the martyrs with the blessings to be enjoyed in his kingdom.

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This last scene, of the second prophecy, concludes with the opening of the temple of God in heaven ; in which was seen “ the ark of his testament : And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.” This is designed to add the greater solemnity to the manifestations of divine justice in his providences ; and is designed to express these general sentiments, that God is mindful of his covenant with his church ; that all the heavenly powers applaud his judgments ; and that his awful artillery is prepared to be sent down upon his enemies. But the earthquake and hail are the same which are again mentioned in the 16th chapter.

PROPHECY THE THIRD.

CHAPTERS XII—XIV.

The Church flying into the Wilderness. The Roman Empire under Seven Forms of Government. The Rise of Antichrist: And a general View of the Judgments by which his Empire will be overthrown.

SCENE I.—CHAP. XII.

The CHURCH flying into the WILDERNESS.

A View of the visible Church from its purest State: The Persecutions she suffered under the Pagan Emperors of Rome: Her Flight into the Wilderness: And the incessant Attempts of the Devil to destroy her.

IN the foregoing chapter there is a very general concise representation of the profanation of the christian church, and its recovery to a state of purity and prosperity; that christians might not be discouraged by the long continuance of their afflictions under antichristian tyranny, but patiently wait for the happy period when Christ's kingdom should prevail on earth. With that chapter the general series of events relating to the world, in distinction from the church, is completed. And now all the remaining prophecies peculiarly relate to the church, being the particular contents of the little roll which was given to St. John, and eaten by him. In this third prophecy the order of events is for a while discontinued, that a view of the church may be given from the beginning of christianity; and of Anti-christ

christ, from his first appearance, to the height of his power, and his utter destruction.

In this vision a prodigy appears in heaven, or high in the airy regions, which could not but command attention. St. John "saw a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." Without hesitation we may pronounce this woman to be the church of God in the united view of the Old and New Testament ; for the church has been one and the same from the beginning of the world, however different in external form. "She is clothed with the sun ;" for God is her sun and her shield, her glory and defence ; the light of heavenly truth is her glorious ornament, and righteousness her pure and shining robe. "The moon is under her feet." The moon thus opposed to the sun is a proper emblem of this lower world, the changeable appearances of it, and the diminutive glory of all those things on which men commonly gaze with admiration : And being under her feet intimates, that the true church of God looks down upon this world with great indifference, while it serves for her present support, is raised above its most flattering enjoyments ; and no longer needs the feeble beams of Jewish ordinances. The crown of twelve stars on her head shews, that she is advanced to great honor and dignity by the doctrine of the twelve apostles, and continues to esteem the gospel as her crown of joy : By these splendid heavenly ornaments she is distinguished from that harlot who appears in the 17th chapter, in the gaudy show of earthly pomp. The finest devices drawn
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by the most celebrated masters of painting, to exhibit the goddesses, the graces, or the grandeur of a city or an empire, which have been commonly represented by women in peculiar curious ornaments, can bear no comparison with the splendid images under which the christian church is here presented to view. Her being in travail signifies, that it is the great design and earnest labor of the church to reveal Christ to the world, and that she has endured the most afflictive pains, like those of a mother, that Christ might be born, and his name continued and glorified in the world, and that he might live in the hearts of men; an illustration of this we may see in the language of St. Paul to the Galatians—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

But at the same time there was another wonderful appearance in the heavenly regions; which was, "a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." It appears by the 9th verse of this chapter, that this dragon is the "old Serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." He is that old Serpent which deceived the first parents of the human race, and is often called Satan in the sacred writings, and represented as the great deceiver of mankind who propagates all manner of falsehood, and prompts men to all wickedness. He has seven heads and ten horns, to shew, that he was the invisible power which directed and managed the beast afterward described in the 13th chapter; that the beast belonged to him, and was his representative and agent.

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The heads of the dragon are crowned ; but the beast has the crowns on his horns : The reason of which difference is this ; the dragon here appears in his original power, as the invisible manager of all the heads of the Roman empire ; but there the beast is represented more especially in his last state, as having his power broken into ten kingdoms. He appears red, not only because purple and scarlet were distinguishing colours of the imperial authority, but to signify his fierce and bloody nature, and that he was stained with the blood of the saints. Moreover ; by his “ tail drawing the third part of the stars of heaven and casting them to the ground,” there is farther evidence that he is the secret head of the Roman empire, which subdued a great part of the kingdoms of the world, and brought down many princes and potentates from the height of their glory, and subjected them to its power.

This “ Dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” This expresseth the watchful malice of the devil against Christ and his religion, that he has been intent upon destroying christianity from its first introduction into the world, as he took every method to destroy the jewish church. Pharaoh was a type of this old serpent, or rather his agent, when he destroyed all the male children of the Hebrews : Satan’s aim then was to cut off all the seed of Abraham, and so defeat the promise ; therefore Pharaoh is called by Ezekiel*, the great dragon. Herod acted by the dragon’s instigation when he murdered the children in Bethlehem, that he might destroy the young child Je-

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fus ;

* Ezek. xxix. 3.

fus ; and to this there is a special allusion in this representation of the dragon, as watching to devour the child as soon as it was born.

Nevertheless, the woman "brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron : And her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." Her child was the very same to whom the promise is made in the 2d Psalm—"Thou shalt have the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."—Jesus Christ was the promised seed of the woman, and the offspring of the jewish church. He was born into the world at the appointed time, and completed his ministry on earth, notwithstanding the vigilance of the wicked Jews to cut him off. And though Satan imagined he had accomplished his design when Christ was crucified, dead, and buried ; yet this man child, to his astonishment, revived, rose from the tomb, and ascended into heaven to the throne of God, so that no hope remained of destroying his person. In this there is also an implication, that his true church and people, which are considered in the New Testament as his body and members, united to him as the head, are also taken under God's peculiar protection in this world, so far that the malice of the devil shall never prevail to the utter destruction of the church ; and that his people shall finally be raised far above Satan's power, even to heaven and the throne of God above to which Christ himself is ascended.

When the woman had brought forth her child, she "fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared

prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." Though this is introduced here immediately after it is said, that her child was taken up to heaven, it would be a great mistake to suppose, that this flight took place immediately after Christ's ascension or the first general publication of the gospel : For all intermediate circumstances are passed over to contract the view, and exhibit the main thing intended. We find the same thing repeated more circumstantially in the 14th verse, after the mention of a furious war carried on by the dragon and his persecuting the woman when he was cast down to the earth. To avoid the rage of his persecutions, the woman flies away into the wilderness on two wings of a great eagle. Therefore the time of this flight is not determined by the mention of it in this place ; and it is only by attending to other parts of the book, where the circumstances of the church are more particularly described, that either the true meaning or time of this flight are to be determined. But the time of her continuance in the wilderness is here fixed : She was to be fed there twelve hundred and sixty days, which is the very same space assigned for the profanation of the outer court of the temple in the preceding chapter. From this circumstance we may conclude that both refer to the same event. This same time is repeated in the 14th verse of this chapter, with this variation of expressions, " a time, times, and an half," which is in common language, a year, two years, and half a year ; which, reckoning three hundred and sixty days to a year, make twelve hundred and sixty days, and according to the prophetic account twelve hundred and sixty years.

The flight of the church into the wilderness is an allusion to the flight of the Israelites from Pharaoh's tyranny, and their long travail through the wilderness, before they obtained rest in Canaan. With respect to this God speaks by Moses*—"Ye have seen what I did unto Egypt, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself"—And again, Moses says in his prophetic song†—"He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him." Here is also some allusion, in her being fed in the wilderness, to Elijah's being fed by the ravens, as well as the feeding of Israel while they were in the desert. The general meaning therefore is, that the church, in flying from persecution, would be brought into a bewildered state, but should nevertheless, in the midst of danger and distress, be preserved and supported by almighty power.

The vision proceeds to represent a fierce war in heaven between Michael the archangel and the dragon, with their forces of angels on each side, in which the dragon is conquered, and cast out with his angels unto the earth. Here the vision seems to take a large scope, representing the war of Satan against christianity, as carried on at first, in the beginning of the gospel, and continued as long as he retained the civil powers of Rome in his service; but the view is very concise. First of all the

war

* Exod. xix. 4.

† Deut. xxxii. 10, 11, 12.

war is represented as carried on in heaven, between Michael's and the dragon's forces; which very naturally signifies, that the gospel at first contended against the powers of hell chiefly with spiritual weapons, opposing divine truth, accompanied with supernatural evidences, to obstinate prejudices, inveterate superstition, subtle sophistry, and all the pride of human wisdom. In this contest the heavenly forces were victorious, the power of the truth prevailed, every high thought was brought down, and all reasonings and cavils against the gospel silenced. The dragon was thus cast down from the height of his spiritual power over the minds of men, and obliged to depend on his earthly power, the empire of Rome, which he had formed and established for the support of his tyranny over mankind.

When the victory over the devil, the great deceiver of mankind, was so far obtained, that he was no longer able to prevent the spreading of the gospel by subtle arguments or the power of deep rooted superstition, and assurance was hereby given of the final victory of Christ over Satan's kingdom in every form; a chorus in heaven is introduced, agreeably to the form of the ancient dramas, celebrating the victory; and rejoicing that God's kingdom and the power of his Christ had prevailed, and that the accuser of their brethren was cast down, who had accused them before God day and night. This has reference to the representation made of Satan's accusations in the beginning of the second chapter of Job, and of the third chapter of Zechariah, and only expresses, in a general and figurative manner, the false charges brought against christians at the

inffligation of this great enemy, as being guilty of grofs immoralities, feditious, enemies to government, &c. In this chorus the victory of the faints is afcribed to the blood of the Lamb, i. e. their faith in him as a facrifice for fins, and in the promifes made to his people ; and to the word of their testimony, or their conftancy in testifying the gospel of the grace of God at the hazard of their lives, and even fuffering death in the caufe with the greateft cheerfulness. All heaven therefore is called upon to rejoice, " Rejoice ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Wo to the inhabiters of the earth and of the fea ! for the devil is come down unto you with great wrath ; becaufe he knoweth that he hath but a fhort time." This wo to the inhabiters of the world implies, great mischief to be done to the Roman empire in general by the devil's rage, while he retained it in his hands by means of paganism ; that he would make great confufion in the government, while he raged againft christianity, and efpecially would not fpare the moft carelefs and worldly professors while he aimed to obliterate the very name of christians, becaufe he would have but a fhort time for the exercife of his authority by the pagan powers of Rome.

" When the dragon faw that he was caft unto the earth, he perfecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." This plainly points at the perfecutions of the church under the pagan emperors of Rome : For thefe were in the early times of christianity, and after thefe were no other for many ages.

But when the woman was brought into the greateft diftrefs and danger, by the violent efforts of the dragon

dragon to destroy her with merciless persecutions, and she was ready to despair of escaping; God appeared in a marvellous manner for her help. "To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." An eagle was the noted standard of the Roman empire. The two wings of an eagle are natural emblems of the two grand divisions of this empire, the eastern and the western, after Constantine had fixed his capital at Constantinople. When paganism was overthrown, christianity had the support and assistance of both these wings, and was raised high above the danger of persecution. But instead of remaining in her primitive state of purity, and maintaining her distinguishing honor in the view of the world as an holy church devoted to the service of God, she was carried into the wilderness, and, like the Israelites, preserved there a long time under the peculiar care of Providence, but tried, and found guilty of great sins, and punished with many divine judgments for a time, times, and half a time, *i. e.* as has been already observed, for three and an half prophetic years, or twelve hundred and sixty vulgar years.

This flight of the church into the wilderness most naturally signifies, that it would be so intermixed with the world, and lost among the vanities and vices of it, that it would be difficult to find it by the true characters of Christ's church, and distinguish it from the common worldly profession of christianity; as the intricate journeyings of the Israelites in the wilderness rendered it difficult to trace out their camp.

Therefore when the dragon could no longer vent his malice against the woman in the direct way of persecution, he "cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman ; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." Waters are interpreted in the 17th chapter, as signifying multitudes of people ; and a flood is frequently used in the ancient prophets in the same figurative sense. Jeremiah speaks of the destruction of the Philistines by northern armies in this language—" * Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein, the city and them that dwell therein : Then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl. At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels."—Therefore by the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth may be meant, that vast multitude of barbarous nations which broke in upon the Roman empire, like a flood overwhelming all parts of it about the year 400, by which the whole form of civil government was at length entirely overthrown. Those invasions may be considered as the effects of Satan's policy, and malice against the church. For all those nations were ignorant idolaters, and so were the proper subjects of Satan's kingdom in the world, and at his command ; and as they came by his influence and orders, they may be said figuratively to be cast out of his mouth. His design was to destroy that empire which had revolted from him, and tak-

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* Jer. lxvii. 2, 3.

en christianity under its protection, that he might be sure of the destruction of the church with that empire, however concealed among such multitudes of men of the world and hypocritical professors of the gospel, by involving all together in unavoidable ruin. But in this he was disappointed : For the barbarous nations, as soon as they were settled in the conquered provinces, instead of overspreading the empire with paganism, themselves complied with the christian establishment, and became zealous supporters of it. Thus this mighty flood was absorbed and lost in the general worldly profession of christianity. Some indeed have supposed, that by this flood we are to understand the multitude of heresies which threatened the destruction of the church soon after christianity became the religion of the empire, which were absorbed by worldly professors, or earthly men, and did no great damage to true christians. As these heresies were cotemporary with the flood of barbarians, perhaps both may be included in the emblem : But this last seems to be the principal thing intended.

But when the dragon found himself disappointed in this great attempt against the whole body of professors, he was still full of wrath against the church ; and despairing of being able by any means to destroy it as a body, he was determined to effect his design in a different manner, and point his malice only against the little remnant of the woman's seed, which he could meet with here and there, who should distinguish themselves by a strict regard to the commands of God, and by the testimony borne to the truth, when the generality of professors should be deceived and corrupted.

SCENE

S C E N E II.—CHAP. XIII. 1—10.

*The ROMAN EMPIRE under SEVEN FORMS
of GOVERNMENT.*

St. John in this Vision is transported to the Seashore ; and as he stood on the Beach, a Seamonster rose up of the most terrible Form, having Seven Heads, and Ten Horns, and upon his Horns Ten Crowns ; and upon his Heads the Names of Blasphemy.

TO know the meaning of this monstrous and furious beast, which is a surprising hieroglyphic, we must have recourse to Daniel's vision of the four great monarchies of the world, and the interpretation then given. * He saw four wild beasts come up out of the sea, of different forms. The first was like a lion with eagle's wings : But afterwards changed the appearance into that of a man. The second was like a bear with three ribs in his mouth between the teeth ; and a command was given, " Arise, devour much flesh." The third was like a leopard, with four wings on his back, and with four heads, and dominion was given unto it. The fourth beast was " dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly ; and it had great iron teeth : It devoured, and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it : And it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns." And while Daniel was observing these horns, " behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots : And behold

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* Daniel, chap. vii.

Chap. 13. PROPHECY III.—SCENE II. 171

in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." A heavenly interpreter then explains the general signification of these beasts, and says, " These great beasts which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth : " But mentions no particulars with respect to the three former, and only declares that the universal kingdom of God on earth should succeed to these four beasts. But at Daniel's request, he explains the meaning of the fourth beast, and says, " The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise : And another shall arise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hand, until a time, and times, and the dividing of time," *i. e.* three prophetic years and an half, or twelve hundred and sixty vulgar years.

It is evident to all who read with attention this and other similar visions in the book of Daniel, that these four beasts which he saw, represent the four famous monarchies of the world, viz. the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman, and are the same which were represented by Nebuchadnezzar's image ; and that the fourth, which had ten horns, and was stronger and more terrible than the others, is a representation of the Roman empire, which was the fourth and last of the great monarchies.

The

The beast which St. John sees in this vision, rises out of the sea as those in Daniel's vision : It has ten horns like Daniel's fourth beast ; and to make it more evident that this is the last of those four monarchies, this beast is a compound of the three others. His form is made up of a leopard, which was the Grecian empire ; a bear, which was the Persian ; and a lion, which was the Assyrian. This plainly intimates, that in the formidable Roman monarchy the powers of all the rest are united, and that this is composed of all those nations over which the dominion of the other beasts extended. As the ten horns in Daniel's vision are there said, to be ten kings which shall arise, so the same interpretation is given of the ten horns of this beast, in the 17th chapter, and the ten crowns upon the horns shew the same thing. The seven heads are also explained in that chapter as signifying seven kings, *i. e.* governing powers ; and other circumstances relating to this beast are interpreted in the same chapter, as we shall see in the course of these observations.

As this beast represents the Roman empire, the seven heads most naturally represent the powers at the head of that empire, during the whole time of its existence, whether emperors, consuls, kings, or any other names. These heads cannot signify, that the empire should have seven governing powers, at one and the same time, each invested with sovereign authority to direct and command the body, which is the proper idea of an head ; for such a government would be a monster indeed : But they must mean that the same empire, as a political body, had seven different powers in succession, one after another,

other, at the head of it. This is a very exact description of the Roman empire, as we shall see more particularly in the 17th chapter.

On the heads of this beast were names of blasphemy. Blasphemy is speaking reproachfully or injuriously of any person, and in its most criminal view is directed against God ; and it may be applied to actions, as far as actions express the sentiments of the mind. Therefore idolatry is called blaspheming the name of God, in several passages of the ancient prophets. Isaiah, in God's name, says of Israel, “ * both ye and your fathers have burned incense upon the mountains, and *blasphemed* me upon the hills.” And Ezekiel speaks in the same manner—“ † In this year fathers have *blasphemed* me—they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented their provocation of their offering.”—Therefore the names of blasphemy, inscribed upon these heads of the beast, declare him to be in open opposition to God, idolatrous, and impious in all his forms.

The dragon gave this beast “ his power, and his seat, and great authority.” The same dragon, who is called, in the preceding chapter, the Devil, and Satan, who acts in a secret and invisible manner, and, as the god of this world, claims the kingdoms of the earth as his domains, was the founder of the empire of this fourth beast ; and he gave this beast his seat, or throne, as it is expressed in the Greek, and even more extensive authority than any which were before him. This beast therefore became as a body for the Dragon, in and by which he appeared

* Isaiah lxxv. 7. † Ezek. xx. 27, 28.

ed and acted in a visible manner, and verified his appearance in the foregoing chapter with seven heads and ten horns.

At length, "one of the heads appeared as if wounded to death ;" it was wounded, and the wound was fatal ; so that the beast was in a dying state, and seemed to be irrecoverable. But in an unaccountable surprising manner the "deadly wound was healed ; and all the world wondered after the beast." Mankind were astonished at this unexpected recovery, as at the greatest miracle ; gazed at the beast as a kind of deity ; and flocked together, with superstitious veneration, to pay homage and subject themselves to his authority. With one consent "they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast :". They readily complied with that superstitious and idolatrous religion which the devil had contrived for the honor of his own kingdom, in opposition to Christ and his gospel, and so worshipped the dragon : And they worshipped the beast as having authority over the nations to command them at his pleasure, and power to compel all to be in subjection, saying, "Who is like unto the beast ? Who is able to make war with him ?" By this we have farther evidence, that the heads of the beast are to be considered as successive, and not as taking place together. For if all existed together, the wounding of one to death could not be thought so fatal to the beast ; nor would his recovery appear so miraculous, or procure such extraordinary veneration. But if they are considered as dropping off one after another, each giving place to another appearing in its room, then the wounding of one to death when no other appeared to succeed

ceed it, might justly be thought fatal, and the recovery of the beast excite admiration.

From the time of this wonderful revival of the beast, a strange alteration was made in his voice and actions. A mouth was given him "speaking great things and blasphemies : And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." He assumed to himself authority and grandeur in a tone before unknown, and uttered the most horrid blasphemies. "He blasphemed God," *i. e.* by the most open idolatrous opposition to his word and pure worship. He blasphemed "his tabernacle," *i. e.* his church ; against the divine doctrines and evangelical order of which he pointed the most malicious reproaches. He blasphemed "them that dwell in heaven," *i. e.* angels and glorified saints ; whose characters he abused for the encouragement of superstition, falsehood, and idolatrous worship. And moreover he was permitted by divine Providence "to make war with the saints, and to overcome them," *i. e.* to carry on a series of persecutions in all the ways which malice can invent, against christians who adhere to the true faith, worship, and obedience of the gospel, in opposition to all the commands and traditions of men ; and to overcome them, so that they should not be able to resist his power, but be reduced to great distress, and even to circumstances of extreme dejection. "And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations ;" the world was to be in subjection as extensively as before, and none to be exempt but such as were written in the Lamb's book of life, who was slain as a sacrifice for sins according to the purpose of God, and his promises from the beginning of the world.

By

By this very extraordinary description it appears, that the Roman empire, under one of its heads, or governing powers, should receive a wound to appearance fatal, so that the recovery of the empire could not reasonably be expected ; that nevertheless it should unexpectedly and in the most surprising manner be revived ; that after its revival, it would appear greatly altered, and become more blasphemous and idolatrous than before, more haughty and tyrannical, and a more implacable enemy to the saints ; and that it should have dominion over all nations, as absolute and extensive as ever.

But for the consolation of the saints, against whom the beast should practise every art, through the whole of his reign, and make open war, they are assured that his tyranny shall not be perpetual, but is limited to forty two months ; the very same time assigned, in the eleventh chapter, for the profanation of the outer court of the temple, and the prophesying of the witnesses in sackcloth ; and the time twice mentioned in the twelfth chapter for the continuance of the woman in the wilderness. This is the fifth time of mentioning this same period of twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days, or common years according to the ancient vulgar reckoning of three hundred and sixty days to a year, within the compass of three chapters : And the design of this frequent repetition is to shew, that the time is certain, and precisely determined, and that all the visions which have this same period affixed refer to the same great event. As surely as divine justice retaliates great crimes, by inflicting punishments adapted to the nature of the
sins,

sins, that power which has made such multitudes its captives, and especially has held the saints in such a state of wretched captivity, shall at last be taken captive and destroyed by the almighty power of Christ ; and that saying shall be verified, " They that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

• Now by all the foregoing observations we may see the plain signification of this vision of the beast. It is the Roman empire, the fourth great monarchy on earth. It was under seven heads, or governing powers, succeeding each other. One of the last of these heads, received a fatal stroke, so that it seemed impossible for that monarchy to exist any longer ; which was in fact the case when Augustulus, the last emperor, was deposed by the Goths, A. D. 476. But after this the monarchy revived, not in a civil, but an ecclesiastical form : It was greatly altered in its appearance ; but the authority exercised was as absolute and extensive as ever. Under an ecclesiastical head, it was supported by the superstition of all nations, and became remarkably domineering and blasphemous, and was to persecute the saints through the long period of twelve hundred and sixty years. From first to last, as it exercised worldly authority, and kept all nations in obedience, it was the same empire, and continues to this day, though now in a decaying state : But the old civil form of the Roman empire expired in Augustulus, and was never revived.

By not attending to the abovementioned distinction, and adhering too strictly to the uninterrupted periods into which he has divided these prophecies, Mr. Lowman is here involved in some confusion of ideas. He speaks of this beast as representing the

Roman empire, and takes notice of the seven forms of government through which it passed, in his note on the third verse of this chapter ; particularly he says,—“ The head which was mortally wounded was the sixth head, or form of government, at the time of the vision.” Yet, in his note on the 11th and 12th verses, he says,—“ The first beast did not arise till the imperial government had passed away ; till Rome seemed to have lost irrecoverably the seat of empire ; till the Roman empire was divided into ten kingdoms.—All these considerations determine the rise of the first beast to be, when the exarchate of Ravenna was given to the papacy ; when Rome was made the seat of the pope’s temporal dominion ; and the last form of Roman government began, which has lasted ever since to this day.” Here seems to be a contradiction both to himself and the vision. For he first allows the beast to have arisen, and to have had six heads in the time of the vision, and that it was the sixth which was wounded to death ; and then says, it did not arise out of the sea till the exarchate of Ravenna was given to the papacy ; which was three hundred years after it was wounded to death in Augustulus.

But the vision itself represents the empire as one beast from beginning to end, to which every head belongs. It was a proper civil empire until the sixth head was gone : But under the seventh head, it assumed an ecclesiastical form mixed with civil power, and maintained the same absolute dominion over the nations by making advantage of their superstition. This last form of power immediately succeeded the sixth head, and there is not the least intimation that the empire was at all in a state of absolute death.

SCENE

SCENE III.—CHAP. XIII. 11—18.

The RISE of ANTICHRIST.

A Second Beast appears rising out of the Earth, having Two Horns like a Lamb. He soon appears fierce and blasphemous, and assumes all the Power of the First Beast, and joins with him. He pretends to have the Authority of a Prophet, and to work Miracles ; and by this Means deceives the Nations, and persuades them to set up an Image of the First Beast and worship it. All are compelled, on Pain of Death, to receive a Mark as Subjects of the Beast in this new Form.

HERE is another view of that blasphemous power which was to keep all nations in subjection, and to persecute and slay the true worshippers of God. The foregoing scene represented this as a civil or worldly power ; being a revival of the imperial authority of Rome in a new form and under a new head, after the mortal wound received in the preceding head. The present scene exhibits this power in an ecclesiastical mixed with a civil view, managed with the hypocritical appearance of innocence, meekness, and an authority purely spiritual, exercised by commission from the Lamb of God, given to one who is his representative.

“A beast appears coming up out of the earth.” The former beast arose out of the sea ; for it was formed out of multitudes of people of different nations, as waters are interpreted in the 17th chapter. But this beast comes up out of the earth, as if he ascended out of some cavern in the earth, or out of the mouth of the bottomless pit mentioned in the 9th chapter ; for which reason he is said, in the 17th chapter to as-

ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition. By his coming out of the earth, an intimation is given, that he owes his original to the earthly or worldly spirit of professors. And as it is afterward said, that he shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, he is to be considered as of infernal original, a power contrived and formed by the devil, to carry on his war against the saints. This is confirmed by his voice; for "he spake as a dragon," notwithstanding the meek and innocent appearance of a lamb.

"He had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." Though horns are the common emblems of power; yet the horns of stronger and fiercer animals denote the higher tone of authority. The horns of a lamb are not made for strength, to push, gore, and destroy, but for distinction and some weak defence. Therefore, though this second beast is not wholly without the appearance of power, no such kind of power appears as threatens any mischief. Whatever his real design is, it is concealed under this harmless form.

A beast is the emblem of an empire, or extensive worldly government: But a lamb is an emblem of Jesus Christ, very frequently used in this book. Therefore this second beast is a power, with a proper head, which pretends to bear a great resemblance to Jesus Christ and his government, and would pass for his representative: But he betrays himself, by his voice and commanding tone, to be a tyrannical furious power, employed by the old serpent as the instrument of his malice against the true church. His two horns may properly signify the two distinct branches of power exercised by this beast, viz. temporal

poral and spiritual ; and in both respects his power far exceeds his appearance.

Notwithstanding the harmless appearance of this beast, he soon discovered a power equal to that of the first terrible monster which arose out of the sea, and indeed was so united with him that their joint agency was hardly distinguishable. For he came into the presence of the first beast, to revive him from the wound, stood before him as his partner, and exercised all the power which belonged to the first beast in conjunction with him ; so that, notwithstanding the dying state in which the first beast had been, and the great weakness occasioned by it, this second beast gave him new strength, and afforded him such effectual assistance, that all the inhabitants of the earth, to the utmost limits of the former empire, not only submitted willingly to the same despotic authority which had been exercised over them by the former Roman empire, but even adorned the new power now connected with it, and paid the most submissive and superstitious homage. By all this it is evident that this second beast is a continuation of the first under a new form, and is joined with it under a new head which arose when the former was mortally wounded ; and that this is to be considered as a representation of the seventh and last state of the Roman empire, under the seventh head or governing power. Therefore the second beast is the antichrist and his empire predicted by the apostles ; which will farther appear by the remaining particulars in this description.

However unaccountable it may seem, that the former tremendous beast should become dependent on a lamb for life and power, it is well accounted

for by the extraordinary prophetic character which this lamb assumes, on account of which he is called, "the false prophet," in the 19th chapter. For "he does great wonders, so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men." He pretends to work miracles as great as ever were wrought in ancient times by persons sent from God, and hereby to prove his authority to be from above. He even claims a power to call down fire from heaven to destroy all who oppose him, as Elijah consumed the captains and their fifties who came to take him ; or to denounce the present and future vengeance of heaven certainly to be executed upon such as refuse to obey his commands.

Moreover, as the former beast, or Roman empire, was so far decayed and lifeless, as to be but a mere shadow or carcass, incapable of commanding or acting merely of itself, without the interposition of some help : The second beast persuaded all nations to unite in one design, and make an image as far as possible resembling the former. This plainly signifies, that the nations would be deceived by the high pretensions of the false prophet, and the terrors with which he threatened them, to form a kind of civil power or extensive imperial authority, like the former imperial power of Rome. This was verified when, with one consent, the ten kingdoms, into which the old Roman empire was divided in the last state of it, gave their power to the pope of Rome and his church, to support his ecclesiastical authority, as mentioned in the 17th chapter ; especially when the empire of Germany was erected with the avowed design, " that the Roman church might have

have a defender or guardian against infidels, heretics, and seditious men*.”

When this image was made, it was of itself inactive and lifeless; but the false prophet gave it life, and made it not only speak, but exert such authority as to command all who refused homage and submission to be killed. The false prophet, in reality, was the life of the image, gave the commands, and was the object of the homage. By his cunning, and magical management, he gained and supported his authority over all nations. Though the old imperial power, which governed the nations, was irrecoverably dead, he contrived to awe mankind into submission to the same universal power, exercised by himself according to his own will. And so effectually did the false prophet make use of this image of the former imperial power of Rome, that he constrained persons of all ages and conditions, “small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:” And forbade any man “to buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

Bishop Newton observes, from Grotius, that “it was customary, in ancient times, for servants to receive the mark of their masters, and soldiers of their generals, and those who were devoted to any deity, of the deity to whom they were devoted: And these marks were usually impressed on their right hands or foreheads; and consisted of hieroglyphical characters, or the name expressed in vulgar letters, or distinguished in numerical letters, according to the fancy of the imposer.” In allusion to this custom, all are here said to be compelled to receive the

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mark

*Sigonius de Reg. Ital. A. D. 800.

mark of the beaft, or his name, or the number of his name ; without which no person whatever was allowed the privilege of any kind of commerce. The mark, and the name of the beaft, are paffed over ; but the number of the name is particularly mentioned. It is faid to be the number of a man, *i. e.* a number commonly ufed among men, and is expreffed by three numeral letters of the Greek alphabet, viz. Ϡ ξ Ϟ [ch, x, ft,] which make the number 666. That there is a myftery or enigma in this number is intimated in thefe expreffions,—“ Here is wifdom. Let him that hath underftanding count the number of the beaft.”

By confidering every part of the defcription of this fecond beaft, it muft be plain, even to a demonftration, that it is a representation of the empire of Antichrift, who is called by St. Paul the “ Man of fin, the fon of perdition, who oppofeth and exalteth himfelf above all that is called God, or that is worfhipped ; fo that he as God fitteth in the temple of God [*i. e.* in the christian church] fhewing himfelf that he is God*.” Or in other words, this fecond beaft is the ecclefiaftical empire of Rome with the bifhop of Rome at the head, which fucceeded the former civil empire after the imperial authority was brought to an end in Auguftulus, and which has maintained equal power over the nations. Very foon after the end of the old imperial authority, and the failure of the form of that monarchy, the bifhops of Rome took advantage of the weaknefs of that fmall remainder of power which was left by the barbarous nations to the city of Rome, and contrived to enrich and aggrandize themfelves.

* 2 Theffa. ii. 3, 4.

themselves. While they pretended to act only in a sacred character, they found a way to get civil power into their hands by imperceptible degrees, and raise themselves to the highest dignity. As their authority increased, they secured it by all kinds of priestcraft, and lying wonders, and set themselves up as Christ's vicars on earth, acting by plenary power from him. The ignorance and superstition of the people exalted them higher and higher, till adoration was paid them as Gods. The power of the church became superior to the civil powers and managed them at pleasure. But in order to secure the civil as well as ecclesiastical power more effectually in their own hands, by the assistance of Pepin king of France they advanced themselves to princely dignity, and obtained the exarchate of Ravenna, and the adjacent territory, as the patrimony of St. Peter, to be their own temporal dominions. And to complete their scheme of worldly power, and keep the nations in subjection, they formed the empire of Germany to defend the church, and enforce its authority; and modelled it in such a manner that many bishops became temporal princes, who assisted in making that empire obsequious to the pope, and extending his power over all the nations.

As to the mark or name of this beast, which the vision passeth over, Sir Isaac Newton supposes the sign of the cross may be understood, which is universally the mark of papists. The name may be taken simply for *Roman Catholic*, which is an appellation common to all who are in the communion of the church of Rome. Or both may be understood in a general sense, as only intending that there should
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be some mark or name to distinguish the subjects of Rome from others. As Christ's people are sealed with his characters, so Antichrist's subjects have some distinguishing marks by which they are known.

But there is greater difficulty in finding out what is meant by the "number of the beast." Many have supposed that a name ought to be found, the letters of which taken together in greek or hebrew will make the number 666 ; and the opinion of Irenæus has been followed by many, who conjectures that *Latinos* is intended. Others make out the number in the hebrew word *Romitt*. Many other words likewise have been thought of, which make the same number, and are significant. But after all attempts this way, it must remain very doubtful whether this is the true method of investigating the mystery. Other methods have also been thought of equally uncertain. But Mr. Lowman supposes the number 666 to point out the time when the papacy was advanced to temporal power, by gaining the patrimony of St. Peter. And though he entertained the idea that the first beast did not arise till the popes gained this princely dignity, and knows not what to make of the second beast, yet his interpretation of the number of the beast is a very probable solution of this enigma. For it leads us to view the pope as that little horn in Daniel, which came up after the ten kings, which was itself a king among the rest, and subdued or brought under his power three kings, viz. the exarchate of Ravenna, the senate and people of Rome, and the German empire ; and was the great blasphemer, persecutor, and despot. To be assured that the bishops and church of Rome should rise to this dignity among
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Chap. 13. PROPHECY III.—SCENE III. 187

the kingdoms into which the old empire was divided, and to have the time ascertained, gives plain marks by which the second beast may be known.

A *name* is often used, in the scriptures and in common language, for high reputation, honor, and dignity. So Moses says to Israel,*—"The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people—to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in *name*, and in honor."—Nathan in his message to David says,†—"I have made thee a great name, like unto the *name* of the great men that are in the earth."—Therefore, by the name of the beast, we may understand his dignity among the kings, and his advancement to temporal dominion; and by the number of his name, may naturally be signified a number which points out the time of his advancement, which was, as nearly as can be computed, 666 years after this vision: For the popes gained their temporal dominions about A. D. 756. And for men to receive the number of his name as a mark of subjection to the beast, is to acknowledge him as a sovereign power from the time assigned for his elevation.

Thus we have had, in the series of these visions, three different views of the great apostasy, and the melancholy state of the christian church, of which the apostles gave the churches repeated warning. It is represented by the profanation of the outer court of the temple, the concealing of the woman in the wilderness, and the appearing of a new mixed power, civil and ecclesiastical blended together, which would be exceeding blasphemous and tyrannical, and rage against all who have the marks of
God's

* Deut. xxvi, 18, 19.

† 2 Sam. vii, 9.

God's true people. Nothing could be more proper than to give such a full description of that kingdom of Antichrist against which all the remaining judgments in this prophetic book are pointed. By this the way is prepared for a particular declaration of the judgments by which the final destruction of the antichristian empire is to be brought on. But if any doubts yet remain as to the meaning of the vision of these two beasts, they will be farther explained by an heavenly interpreter in the 17th chapter.



SCENE IV.—CHAP. XIV. 1—14.

Farther Assurance given of the Destruction of the Empire of Antichrist : And an Anticipation of the Triumph of the Saints.

IT was a very melancholy prospect for Christ's faithful people to look forward, and think of the continuance of the reign of Antichrist for so long a time as 1260 years; that he should practise against the truth all that time, and prosper, and slay the saints. Therefore to dispel this gloom, and encourage God's sealed people to wait patiently for the time of the deliverance of the church from this melancholy state, they are assured by this vision that God will preserve his little remnant, grant them the joys of his heavenly kingdom as a reward for their sufferings on earth, revive the knowledge of his gospel among the nations, and finally punish all worshippers of the beast with utter destruction.

Here, in the first place, a Lamb is seen standing
 "on mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty
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Chap. 14. PROPHECY III.—SCENE IV. 189

four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." Mount Sion, in the ancient city Jerusalem, was the hill on which the temple stood; and on that account it is frequently mentioned in the Psalms as the place of God's visible residence. By the Lamb Christ is represented. His appearing on mount Sion, intimates that he is present with the church of true worshippers, and will maintain his own kingdom in the world, notwithstanding all the attempts of Satan against it; and that he will grant his faithful people every token of his peculiar care and favor, and finally assemble them together in one joyful company in the heavenly Jerusalem, where they shall be perfectly happy forever.

The 144,000 which appear with him, having his Father's name written in their foreheads, is the very same number mentioned in the 7th chapter as sealed out of all the tribes of Israel; who were to be secured, as God's peculiar people, in the midst of the corruptions of the church, and the judgments to be brought on the world. These represent that little flock of Christ which should continue distinguished in the eye of God in the midst of the anti-christian empire, and be preserved from the general apostasy. They are to be considered as the same with the worshippers of the inner court, and the witnesses who prophesy in sackcloth; and they are the true offspring of the church after her flight into the wilderness, and that remnant of her seed who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This sealed company is represented as standing round the Lamb, to signify their faithful adherence to him and dependence upon him as their King and Savior, and Christ's constant

stant care of them. And if by mount Sion we understand the heavenly temple, it signifies that the little remnant of Christ's people, who have suffered on earth, shall rejoice with him forever in his heavenly kingdom. The heavenly church is described in similar figures in the epistle to the Hebrews—"Ye are come to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."

After this appearance there was a great sound from heaven, like that "of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and the voice of harpers harping with their harps." There seemed to be one general concert of a great multitude of singers and musicians, incomparably grand, majestic, and harmonious; but interrupted, at proper intervals, with shouts of joy like the noise of the mighty billows of the ocean or peals of thunder. Like the music of the Jewish church, all kinds of instruments were united, with inexpressible melody, and accompanied with the plaudits of a vast assembly. This represents the joy of all the saints both in heaven and earth, when Christ takes full vengeance on the enemies and persecutors of his true church.

The anthem which this chosen number sung was new, adapted to that particular occasion, so "that no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty four thousand which were redeemed from the earth." This may intimate, not only that none can join in praising God for the blessings of redemption but such as have obtained a part in them, but
that

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that the mercies of God to his afflicted saints during the reign of the beast, and in their deliverance, would be so peculiar, that they only who had passed through these sufferings could, under deep impressions of the mercy, praise God for deliverance.

A particular description of this joyful company follows. They had not been "defiled with women, for they are virgins." They "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." They "were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God." The jewish church is called an harlot, by the ancient prophets, when she became notoriously guilty of idolatry: And for the same reason, the christian church in like manner corrupted with idolatry and superstition in the most notorious degree, and by all kinds of artifice enticing men to such false religion connected with all wickedness, is called, in the 17th chapter, "The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth;" and all the kings of the earth are said to have committed fornication with her, and all the inhabitants of the earth to have drank of the wine of her fornication. Therefore this select company are called virgins, because they have not joined in this figurative fornication of an apostatized church. They follow the Lamb as constant disciples, who cannot be drawn away from the doctrines or worship of the gospel by any artifice or terrors. They continue obedient to his commands, and in heart and life are conformed to his holy example, sincerely aiming to be perfect in every good work. They are redeemed from among men, by Christ's purchase of them as his people

ple, and their deliverance from captivity under sin and Satan ; and are like the first born of the Israelites, consecrated to God. They are also like the first fruits of the field, which are gathered and presented to God, previous to that plentiful harvest which will be brought into the church when recovered from apostasy, and to that complete harvest which will at last be gathered into heaven. Their religion is free from all falsehood and hypocrisy ; their morals are pure ; their character unrepachable ; and they will be presented at last before their glorious Redeemer without spot, and blameless.

Immediately after this triumphant chorus, an angel is seen flying in the midst of heaven, *i. e.* in the regions of the air, “ having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” It is evident that this does not refer to the first publication of the gospel by the apostles ; because it immediately precedes the execution of judgment upon the kingdom of the beast. Nor does it refer principally to the time when all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of Christ by an universal publication and reception of the gospel ; for that will not be until the utter destruction of the beast and false prophet. But it is a publication of the gospel preparatory to the fall of mystical Babylon, for it is accompanied with a warning of this judgment as at hand, and a general exhortation to “ fear God and give glory to him” on this very consideration. It must therefore signify some remarkable spreading of the knowledge of the gospel at the latter end of the reign of antichrist, as one great means of his destruction ; a publication
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of the gospel among the nations who had long neglected and grown ignorant of it, where it was almost lost in the midst of the prevailing corruptions of religion. St. Paul says, “* Christ will consume that wicked one by the spirit of his mouth :” Which must mean his word ; for this is called “† the sword of the spirit,” and is represented in the first vision as coming out of Christ’s mouth. The mind of man must first receive the knowledge of divine truth as revealed in the word of God, before it can be recovered from the delusions of false religion.

By this appearance of the angel in swift flight through the air to publish the gospel among the nations, there is an intimation that when the gospel begins to be published it will make swift and irresistible progress, until ignorant multitudes are made acquainted with the pure doctrines of christianity. And it is called, “the everlasting gospel,” to signify that, as it is a glorious revelation from the eternal God, and was at first published with incontestible evidences from heaven, so it shall never be wholly banished from the world, but however lost or neglected for a long time, shall again be proclaimed among the nations, and prevail to the end of the world.

This angel calls to all men every where, “Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come : And worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” It is said, “the hour of his judgment is come,” because in this vision it is brought into a near view ; and in the prophetic style, that which is near is spoken of as already come. The character

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of

* 2 Theff. ii. 8.

† Ephes. vi. 17.

of God as the creator of all things is very particularly mentioned, in opposition to idolatry, which divides the attributes and government of the one true God among many superior and inferior deities, assigning to each a particular department. The idolatry of the christian church is more especially pointed at, which in imitation of the heathen has multiplied the objects of worship, and deified dead saints as having distinct parts assigned them in managing the affairs of the world.

When all these things are well considered, it seems very reasonable to conclude, that this publication of the gospel refers to the time when the primitive doctrines of christianity were revived by the preaching of Luther, Calvin, and other protestant reformers. Especially as the art of printing, which was invented about half a century before, was then brought to such perfection, that Bibles in the vernacular tongues, expositions of scripture, learned vindications of the truth against errors and corruptions, and many volumes of religious instruction, were printed in great numbers, and dispersed every where. These gave the world loud warning against idolatry, and recalled the nations of Europe to the worship of the one true God according to his written word. This was the first great shock to the kingdom of Antichrist, the earthquake which prepared the way for that destruction of his capital and whole empire, which might afterward be surely expected. And this was a prelude to the last and universal propagation of the gospel through the earth.

After this another angel followed, proclaiming—
“Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city; because
cause

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cause she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This is an anticipation of the destruction of that great city, which is so particularly and pathetically described in the 18th chapter. There the same proclamation is made by an angel glorious in his appearance ; and it may be concluded that the same event is here intended. The vision hastens to shew the fulfilment of the mysterious designs of providence, that the repeated view of the end of their afflictions might afford strong consolation to the saints.

By Babylon is meant the metropolis of the anti-christian empire, which must be Rome, according to the observations made on the 13th chapter, and as will more fully appear in the 17th chapter. It is the same city which, in the 11th chapter, is called Sodom and Egypt : And it is here called Babylon, because it is the seat of idolatry like ancient Babylon, and holds the true church of God in captivity, as is hinted in the 13th chapter. A mysterious name is used for Rome, partly because all prophecies have some veil thrown over them ; and partly because in St. John's day it would have been a crime against the empire to say in plain terms, *Rome is fallen*. It is said to be fallen, as a thing already done, because that great event was certain, and would be accomplished in due time. This proclamation has reference to that passage in Isaiah's prophecies respecting ancient Babylon, * where he uses these very words—" Babylon is fallen, is fallen :"—And to the words of Jeremiah †—" Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken : The nations have drunken of her wine ;

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* Isa. xxi. 9.

† Jer. li. 7, 8.

wine ; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed ; Howl for her."— When the Angel says, " she made all nations drink of the wine of the *wrath* of her fornication," according to our translation we are to understand, that her fornication provokes the wrath of God. But the greek word *θυμο* [thumou] may as well signify any vehement desire and ardor of the mind or affections ; which may be applied to lust as well as anger, and the sentence may be read thus, " she made all nations drink of the wine of the vehemence or raging ardor of her fornication," or of her raging fornication ; expressing the furious zeal with which a corrupt church propagates her idolatries. This has reference to a practice among the heathen in ancient times, of preparing a magical potion for those whom they would entice to love and lewd embraces. Thus Rome is here represented as having enchanted all nations, by bewitching arts, to devote themselves to her superstitions and idolatries.

A third angel followed after the former, crying with a loud voice, " If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb : And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever : And they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." This is a most awful threatening against all the subjects of the empire of the beast. The wrath
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of God is denounced against them in figures which convey ideas as terrible as can be formed in the human mind, comprehending the greatest judgments both in this world and the future. It was customary in ancient times to punish criminals with death by giving them a cup of wine to drink, in which some strong poison was infused, and when the wine was of the strongest and purest kind, without any mixture of water, it took the strongest tincture of poison, and operated with greater violence. Therefore the wrath of God is here compared to such a fatal potion, in opposition to the enchanting cup with which Babylon intoxicated the nations. This cup of God's wrath is said, according to a literal translation of the greek, to be *mixed unmixed*, *i. e.* to be mixed with tormenting and fatal ingredients in the purest wine without any thing to mitigate the violence of the operation. As the judgments of God are often expressed, in the ancient prophecies, by the cup of his fury, or the cup of trembling and astonishment; and the prophet * Jeremiah is commanded to give such a cup to all the nations, and compel them to drink it; so the execution of divine wrath upon all who worship the beast is here expressed by drinking of such a cup.

But the just vengeance of heaven against all who consent to become subjects of Antichrist, especially after this warning, is expressed in many additional figures: "That they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," *i. e.* according to the express doctrine of Christ and his apostles, they shall be cast into hell, the furnace of fire, where

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shall

* Jer. xxv. 29.

shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth; and when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire, they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power. The same representation is given, of the destruction of the beast and the false prophet with their adherents, in the 19th chapter. Though indeed, temporal punishments of the most dreadful kind may be expressed in metaphors taken from the punishment of the wicked in another world, and the metaphors must be understood as signifying judgments in this world when applied to the beast as an empire; yet when they are applied to the subjects of the beast individually, or to the false prophet as a person at the head of the antichristian empire, they extend to future everlasting misery, the punishment threatened in the gospel as the portion of all wicked men. The perpetuity of their misery is expressed by this circumstance, that the "smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever;" and that "they have no rest day nor night." What can be more terrible than the idea, of burning in flames of unquenchable fire doubly enraged with liquid brimstone? of being consigned to this torment without rest day or night? of clouds of smoke ascending from the tormented bodies of wicked men forever and ever, as from a never ceasing furnace? These, it is granted, are metaphors; but they must have some foundation in truth and the realities which will appear hereafter, or be very impertinently used. There is no other way of conveying to the human mind any ideas of the misery of the wicked in the future world, but in figurative language taken from present sensible torment; as this is also the only way

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way in which the heavenly happiness can be described, to represent it by the most transporting scenes of joy and felicity which can be imagined on earth. As the reality of the latter will far exceed all that earthly metaphors can express; there is the same reason to think that the reality of the former cannot fall short of the dreadful ideas conveyed by the strong figures in which it is described.

After this representation of the dreadful punishment of the subjects of the beast, this sentence follows—"Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." The purport of the sentence is this—Here, in the view of the dreadful and everlasting punishment of all who receive the mark of the beast which is given in this vision, the saints have a good reason for patience. It is given before the proper place in the order of the visions for this very purpose, to encourage those who have the seal of God upon them in opposition to the mark of the beast, to wait patiently for the manifestation of divine wrath against their enemies. They belong to God, for they obey his commands and not the voice of the dragon; and they sincerely believe what Christ has taught them in his gospel: Therefore God will appear in their favor, to save them and make them forever happy, when he punishes hypocritical antichristian professors.

But because an objection might be made against the consolation here offered to good christians; who would be ready to say—"How can it be a sufficient encouragement to us, who adhere to the gospel, and endure so great sufferings during the long period of antichrist's reign, to know that after many

centuries these sufferings shall have an end? Must not multitudes die in the cause of Christ before the appointed season of deliverance comes, who will never see the happy state of the church on earth?" This particular and very powerful consolation is added—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." By this, all that suffer martyrdom under the persecutions of the beast are assured that, though they will not see the days of vengeance on their adversaries, and the advancement of the church to a state of purity and prosperity on earth, they will nevertheless be in a state of blessedness. They are blessed after death as all other faithful servants of Christ are. As they have been seeking glory, honor, and immortality by patient continuance in well doing, their labor is finished, and they obtain rest. All that shall suffer from this time through the whole reign of the beast, shall rest from all their labors and sorrows in the present world, and "their works follow them:" None of their works of love and obedience to Christ shall be forgotten and lost, but will be remembered and rewarded with consummate glory and joy in the heavenly paradise.

SCENE

S C E N E V.—CHAP. XIV. 14—20.

A general Representation of the Judgments by which the Empire of Antichrist will be overthrown; in a Vision of a great Harvest and Vintage.

HERE the destruction of the empire of antichrist appears to be the effect of two distinct and remarkable manifestations of divine wrath against his subjects, compared to an harvest and vintage. The first, though a great judgment on the nations who worship the beast, which should cut off the strength and glory of his kingdom, yet would consist, not so much in the slaughter of God's enemies, as in the revolt of multitudes of antichrist's subjects from his tyranny. But the last may be considered as the complete destruction of the man of sin and his followers, attended with dreadful circumstances of bloodshed among the nations which follow his standard, like the treading of a winepress when a large vintage has been gathered in, which pours out a flood of purple juice overflowing all the vats: For blood comes out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles.

St. John "looked and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle." By the description of this angel he appears to be Jesus Christ himself; the very same person who appeared in the beginning of the 6th chapter going forth on a white horse conquering and to conquer; and who appears in the 19th chapter at the head of the armies of heaven, proceeding
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to a glorious victory over the beast and false prophet with their armies. One of his distinguishing titles both in the Old and New Testament is, *The Son of Man*. The crown on his head shews him to be dignified above the angels, as the prime minister of Providence. He is seated on a cloud, as his chariot, to denote that he comes for the execution of judgment, to collect his people together, and punish those who persist in idolatry and wickedness : And this appearance is a resemblance of his glorious appearance at the last day, when he will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This cloud is white, as an emblem of purity, majesty, and righteousness.

Then " another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap : For the time is come for thee to reap ; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle, and the earth was reaped." This order given by another angel, who comes out of the temple, or from the divine presence, is an intimation that the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom God governs the world, as by him it was created, does every thing according to his Father's will and command, and at such times when all things are prepared for the accomplishment of his purposes ; and that, when he executes his Father's will, all the angels of heaven stand ready to perform such services as God assigns them.

There has been some difficulty among expositors in determining what is meant by reaping the harvest of the earth : Whether we are to understand it as a symbol of mercy to the church, and an ingathering

gathering of converts to Christ ; or of wrath on the subjects of the beast, as a prelude to that more dreadful slaughter represented by the vintage. The prophet Jeremiah foretels the judgments to be brought on Babylon by the armies of Cyrus, under the figure of an harvest,—“ * Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor ; it is time to thresh her : Yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.” And Joel, speaking of the mighty victory of the great God over the armies of the heathen, and his sitting to judge them in the valley of Jehoshaphat, says, “ † Put ye in the sickle ; for the harvest is ripe : Come, get ye down ; for the press is full, the fats overflow ; for their wickedness is great.” To these passages the vision seems to allude. But Christ useth the figure of an harvest to signify the conversion of multitudes by the gospel : For he says to his disciples, “ The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few ; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.” He also compares the end of the world, when the final separation shall be made of the righteous and the wicked, to the reaping of an harvest : “ For the angels shall be sent out to reap both the wheat and the tares, and will gather, first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them ; and then the wheat to be preserved in the heavenly world.” By attending to all the abovementioned scriptures, and especially the last, we may see that an harvest is not merely a representation of great executions of wrath on wicked men, but the merciful as well as judicial effects of the preached gospel, by which the antichristian empire

* Jer. li. 33.

† Joel iii. 13.

empire will be destroyed. Therefore the harvest and the vintage are distinctly exhibited, as judgments upon that empire.

The harvest is first, as it is in the order of nature : And this seems to be the general meaning of it, That the publication of the gospel among all the nations belonging to the beast, effected by the art of printing, and some extraordinary alarm given to the world, will bring multitudes to the knowledge of the truth and convert them to God, and at the same time separate all that refuse to be reclaimed from their errors and heathenish worship, as objects of divine indignation, upon whom his threatenings will be executed.

The vintage signifies the last great judgment upon the beast and his subjects, by which his empire shall be totally destroyed. That prophetic language of Isaiah, in the beginning of his 63d chapter, shews the meaning of treading a winepress ; that it is a figurative expression of the destruction of enemies. There Christ appears like some mighty prince returning from battle. His garments are stained red, as if he had been treading a winepress, and he makes this answer to the inquiries concerning the color of his garments, " I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me ; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment : For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.—And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury ; and I will bring down their strength to the earth."

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This vintage appears very full and complete. The angel with his sickle cuts off at once both the vines and grapes of the earth. The vineyard is large, comprehending all the nations belonging to the antichristian empire ; and the grapes are in great abundance, and are cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God, which comprehends them all, and overflows with the juice. The dreadful slaughter which will be made of Christ's enemies, either literally or metaphorically, is represented by blood coming out of the winepress even to the horse bridles : It is like the destruction made by an engagement of two great armies, when the horses wade, even up to their bridles, in the blood of the slain. Therefore this points out that great and decisive battle, between Christ and his armies and the subjects of the beast, which is more fully exhibited in the 19th chapter, which will follow after the fall of the great city Babylon, the metropolis of Antichrist.

PROPHECY THE FOURTH.

CHAPTERS XV—XIX.

The particular Judgments to be brought on the Empire of Antichrist in a long Series, issuing in its Destruction. A Description of the great Harlot, and an Explanation of the Emblem, as signifying Antichristian Rome, called by the mystical Name of Babylon. The Overthrow of Babylon, and the pathetick Lamentation at her Fall. Christ and his Armies gain a complete Victory over the Beast and false Prophet.

SCENE I.—CHAP. XV.

The Song of Moses imitated by the Saints, in the realizing View of their Deliverance from the Tyranny of the Beast. Preparation made for the Execution of a Series of Judgments on the Empire of Antichrist, by the Appearance of Seven Angels, with Seven Vials, or Cups, full of the Wrath of God.

BY the sounding of six trumpets, these visions have already informed us of a series of judgments brought on the Roman empire and the world in a civil view, so far as the affairs of the church have any connexion with them. Likewise a general view has been given of the effects of the 7th trumpet, as the last wo, particularly directed against the empire of Antichrist, and bringing on the final destruction of it. And now the prophecy proceeds to give a particular view of a series of judgments which have respect to a corrupt church more especially,

ially, and issue in its complete overthrow; the circumstances of which are more fully declared in the 16th and 18th chapters.

There is no necessity of supposing all these vials to be poured out at, or immediately before the sounding of the seventh trumpet mentioned in the eleventh chapter. Nor is the order of events so strictly observed, that these plagues must have their beginning after the force of the second wo is abated. It is plainly the design of the prophecy, after giving a general view of the state of the world, to go back, and give a new and distinct representation of a long succession of judgments to be executed on the empire of Antichrist in a peculiar manner. And they may, with good reason, be supposed to begin when the power of the beast had risen to a remarkable height; and to go on until the last vial, which coincides with the seventh trumpet, completes the overthrow.

In this vision there is a most wonderful appearance in heaven. Seven angels are seen coming out with seven plagues, which comprehend all the manifestations of the wrath of God against the corrupted church. And immediately after this St. John "saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." This sea of glass may be taken for the same which was seen in the temple of heaven in the beginning of these prophetic visions, resembling the brazen sea in Solomon's temple. Its being mingled with fire, may only signify, that the vessel seemed to be made of rubies, or the most costly

costly gems, reflecting the radiance of the sun ; and that all who enter into the heavenly temple, are cleansed from all moral defilements in the blood of Christ, which is most precious in the sight of God. But as the song of Moses is immediately mentioned, as sung by the joyful company standing *on*, or, as it may be better translated, *at* or *near* the sea of glass, it seems more probable that this was some representation of a sea over which those saints seemed to have but just passed, referring to the Red sea which the Israelites passed. It was not real, but hieroglyphical, and therefore it might appear like glass, smooth and shining ; and it seemed mingled with fire, probably to denote that the difficulties and dangers they had passed through, in making their escape from the dragon's power, were greater than common, and that they had been pursued with fire as well as sword. At this sea stood a select company, who had just passed over, and obtained a triumph over the beast, and his image, his mark, and the number of his name, *i. e.* who would not acknowledge him in his pretended prophetic character, nor be compelled to submission by the civil powers employed by him, nor receive any mark of subjection to his ecclesiastical authority, nor look up to him with veneration on account of the name he has gained among earthly sovereigns. And, by uniting both the foregoing significations of this sea, They appear as if they had just passed through a sea of troubles, and, even literally according to the Greek name, a red sea, through blood and fiery trials ; and as if they had been baptized into Christ by fire as well as water, and so purified from the pollutions

pollutions of the world, and sanctified for the service and enjoyment of God.

As the Israelites sung the praises of God for their deliverance from Pharaoh and his army, after they had passed the Red sea, and seen their enemies drowned, so this select company adopt the song of Moses, and praise God and the Lamb. Their song is in the same general strain with that of Moses, &c. for it celebrates the majesty and power, holiness, mercy, and justice of God, manifested in all his works, especially in his wonderful providences with respect to his church. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." The works of creation are great and wonderful: All that attentively observe them must be struck with admiration, and full conviction of the almighty power of God. The saints also observe the glory of the divine attributes displayed in the works of Providence, by his great mercies to the church, and righteous judgments on his enemies. In the realizing view of that time when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord Jesus Christ, this faithful company rejoice and praise God for the preparation made for that happy state of the church by the judgments brought on the kingdom of the beast.

After this the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened, *i. e.* the inmost part of the temple, where the ark was deposited in the Jewish temple, and where the divine glory appear-

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ed. From thence the seven angels which had the seven plagues came out. They were the ministers of Providence to execute the judgments of God upon Antichrist and his empire. They appeared in the habit of priests, clothed in pure and white linen, signifying that God would execute his judgments in righteousness, and that he would be glorified by these ministrations of his angels. Their breasts were girded with golden girdles, to shew the excellency of their nature, and the dignity of their office.

When these seven angels were come into full view, one of the four cherubim, described in the 4th chapter as standing round the throne, which are symbols of God's universal Providence administered by the angels, gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials or cups filled with the wrath, or with the wine of the wrath of God mentioned in the 10th verse of the preceding chapter. And as soon as this was done, "the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of the Lord, and from his power: And no man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." When the tabernacle was sanctified by Moses, and the temple by Solomon, God gave a visible token of his presence and favor by the cloud which came down and covered them: And the continual appearance of his glory over the ark was a symbol of his constant residence there, for the protection of his people, and the punishment of his enemies. When the fire of divine anger was kindled against Korah and his company, so that they were consumed and swallowed up, Jehovah manifested his glory to all Israel as a God of power and vengeance

vengeance by the same cloud. And afterward, God vindicated the characters of Moses and Aaron in the same manner. We may therefore understand in general, by the "smoke from the glory of God and from his power filling the temple," that his power and wrath should from that time be manifested against antichrist and his adherents, until these plagues were accomplished.

SCENE II.—CHAP. XVI.

The Seven Vials, or Cups of Wrath, poured out by the Angels, bring a Succession of particular Judgments, by which the great City, or Church of Rome, the Capital of the Antichristian Empire, is at last totally overthrown.

THE way being prepared in the foregoing scene, a voice out of the temple, or the most holy place, now gives the order to the seven angels "to go and pour out the seven cups of the wrath of God." Nothing in this whole Revelation has been more difficult than to ascertain the particular judgments signified by these vials. Many commentators have yielded too great indulgence to fancy, and given very whimsical interpretations. Yet it is plain, that these judgments are inflicted on the empire of the beast in orderly succession; that they are brought on before the overthrow of the capital city, which is effected by the last of the vials; and that the effects of some of the cups or vials have such remarkable characters that the application of them to historical facts is obvious: These may serve as a clue to direct us through the whole series,

which may with reason be supposed to include several centuries.

It may be observed that, though these angels were ready, they waited for an order from their Lord : For the angels of heaven are at the command of God and the Lamb, and do nothing but according to the divine will. An order is given by " a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth :"

VIAL I.] Upon which " the first went and poured out his vial upon the earth ; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." The following vial so plainly points at the bloodshed in the wars for the recovery of the holy land, that this first vial must signify some judgment previous to that great event. All these cups of divine wrath evidently allude to the plagues sent on Pharaoh and the Egyptians, previous to the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage ; and they prepare the way for the deliverance of the christian church from the cruel tyranny of Antichrist. One of the plagues of Egypt was a boil, or painful ulcer, breaking out on man and beast : Which was so very distressing to the Egyptians that it is said, the magicians themselves could not stand before Moses because of the boil. The plague of this vial does not bring a sore literally, but figuratively, for the visions are hieroglyphical : And it is brought, not on the world at large, but on the men who belong to the empire of the beast. Now this may signify more generally, that great and distressing troubles will be brought on the nations

nations in subjection to the beast : For Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, expresth every kind of trouble by this same figure—“ When every one shall know his own fore and his own grief : ”—And Job’s afflictions were very great, when he was smitten with sore boils, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. In this general sense, any very remarkable time of trouble which peculiarly affects the worshippers of the beast, and which is the beginning of their plagues, may be considered as corresponding to this vial. But this idea seems too indeterminate ; because every one of these vials brings great affliction, and it might be difficult in this view to distinguish the first from the rest. Therefore it may be observed that, as ulcers breaking out in the natural body originate from itself, and are the effect of ill humors in the constitution, so this figure may be applied to the body of the antichristian polity ; and it may signify, that this strange compound body, made up of civil and ecclesiastical power unnaturally blended together, would breed great ferments in its own constitution, which would occasion pain and vexation in all the members, and be a general, distressing, and durable evil ; for they are represented as still complaining of their pains and sores under the fifth vial. This interpretation is confirmed by the figures in which the prophet Isaiah describes the gross corruptions in government and religion in his day—“ * From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.” Therefore in plain language, the plague inflicted by this vial is, that in the empire of the beast so many corruptions of

every kind should be bred, and break out through the whole complex body, that all should suffer great vexation on this account, however ignorant they might be of the true cause.

This we find remarkably verified, soon after the pope had gained complete establishment in his temporal dominions, and formed the empire of Germany as the instrument of his ecclesiastical monarchy. In the year 756 Pepin gave the pope his temporal dominions. In the year 800 Charles the great was proclaimed emperor by the pope's means, and crowned by his hands. From that time the popes laid hold on every advantage to increase their own authority, and raise themselves above the emperors. For this purpose they practised all manner of intrigues, fomented the contentions which arose from time to time about the succession to the imperial dignity, and at last made that dignity greatly dependent on their own will. The ambition and growing power of the bishops of Rome were sources of many vexations. And at the same time the corruptions of religion were greatly increased; the spirit of superstition took deep possession of the minds of all ranks of people; and heavy burdens of penances, masses, pilgrimages, &c. were laid upon men as necessary for their salvation. Hildebrand, who was chosen pope in the year 1073, by the name of Gregory VII, carried his claims far beyond all that were before him. He assumed the authority of sovereign judge over all, of choosing and deposing emperors, and absolving subjects from their allegiance. He actually used this power by excommunicating and deposing the emperor Henry IV, and other princes of Europe. And in a word,

word, as Dupin expreffeth himfelf—He did all that he could to become the only fovereign monarch of the univerfe. This was a fore evil, and occafioned continual uneafinefs among the fubjects of the beaft. Emperors and kings, biffhops and councils, ftruggled in vain againft thefe encroachments; felt inward vexation; and were involved in endless quarrels, bloody wars, and unnatural rebellions. Their religion alfo was more and more burdened with grievous impositions, and mortifying feverities; and all were complaining of thefe political and religious grievances, and could find no remedy. This ftate of the nations under the papacy is very diftinguifhable in the hiftory of the 10th and 11th centuries: And it may very well be compared to a grievous fore breaking out in the body of the papal empire.

VIAL II.] Then “the fecond angel poured out his vial upon the fea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: And every living foul died in the fea.” Both this and the following vial have a plain allufion to that plague of Egypt, which turned all the waters into blood. But here are two diftinct plagues of the fame kind; the firft far more dreadful than the fecond; but both fimilar in their nature and effects. The firft turns the whole fea into blood, *i. e.* the Mediterranean fea, for that was moft noted in that age, and makes general deftruction of every living thing in it. The fecond affects only the rivers and fountains of waters.

We may obferve a great fimilitude between the effects of this vial and thofe of the fecond trumpet, in the 8th chapter. When the fecond trumpet founded, a great mountain burning with fire was

cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood, and the third part of the creatures in it died, and the third part of ships were destroyed: Which represented the great calamities brought on the roman empire, the vast slaughter of men by the northern barbarians, and the distresses and overthrow of Rome. But at the pouring out of this vial of God's wrath, the slaughter is represented as much more universal, the whole sea becomes as the blood of a dead man, and every living creature dies. As the first vial was poured out upon the earth, this by way of distinction is poured out upon the sea. And as the sea, out of which the first beast arose, is interpreted in the 17th chapter as meaning multitudes of nation and people, we are led to understand by the "sea being turned into blood," great and general slaughter and destruction made of the nations belonging to the empire of Antichrist in some universal war; and the representation will be still more striking if the war is carried on over the sea.

Now nothing can be found in history, since Antichrist's empire has been erected, so fully answerable to the bloody effects of this vial, as the famous wars carried on for the recovery of the holy land. They began in the year 1088, and continued two centuries. The incredible numbers of men, of all nations under the papacy, which were slain, or perished by the common incidents of war, fully justify the hieroglyphical view in this vision. This event was so great and remarkable a judgment, that it might highly merit a place in these visions; and here it is most evidently pointed out. It was certainly one of the greatest judgments ever brought on the antichristian nations, and was a preparatory step towards the destruction

struction of the empire of the beast : For they who escaped death and returned from these bloody expeditions, brought back with them, into the west, arts and learning, so that the original languages of scripture were taught in the schools ; and by the revival of letters the errors of past ages were exposed to fair examination and detection.

Of these wars the celebrated historian, Dr. Robertson, gives this general account. “ As there is no event in the history of mankind more singular than that of the crusades, every circumstance that tends to explain, or give any rational account of that extraordinary frenzy of the human mind, is interesting. The end of the world was expected about the close of the 10th, or the beginning of the 11th century. This occasioned a general alarm : And this belief was so universal and so strong, that it mingled itself with their civil transactions ; so that many charters in the latter part of the 10th century began in this manner.—As the end of the world is at hand, and by various calamities and judgments the signs of its approach are now manifest.—One effect of this was, that a great number of Pilgrims resorted to Jerusalem, with a resolution to die there, or to wait the coming of the Lord. Kings, earls, marquisses, bishops, and even a great number of women, besides persons of all ranks, flocked to the holy land. These pilgrims filled Europe with lamentable accounts of the state of christians in the holy land. Besides this, it was usual for many of the christian inhabitants of Jerusalem, as well as the other cities of the east, to travel as mendicants through Europe, and, by describing the wretched condition of the professors of the christian faith under the dominion of the infidels,

infidels, to extort charity, and excite zealous persons to make some attempts in order to deliver them from oppression.

“ When the minds of men were thus prepared, the zeal of a fanatical Monk, who conceived the idea of leading all the force of Christendom against the infidels, and of driving them out of the holy land by violence, was sufficient to give a beginning to that wild enterprize. Peter the Hermit, for that was the name of this martial apostle, ran from province to province with a crucifix in his hand, exciting princes and people to this holy war, and, wherever he came, kindled the same enthusiastic ardor for it with which he himself was animated. The council of Placentia, where upwards of 30,000 persons were assembled, pronounced the scheme to have been suggested by the immediate inspiration of heaven. In the council of Clermont, still more numerous, as soon as the measure was proposed, all cried out with one voice, *It is the will of God*. Persons of all ranks were smitten with the contagion. Not only the gallant nobles of that age with their martial followers, whom the boldness of a romantic enterprize might have been apt to allure ; but men in a more pacific station of life, ecclesiastics of every order, and even women and children engaged with emulation in an undertaking deemed sacred and meritorious. If we may believe the concurrent testimony of contemporary authors, 6,000,000 of persons assumed the cross, which was the badge that distinguished such as devoted themselves to this holy warfare. All Europe, torn up from the foundations, seemed ready to precipitate itself in one united body upon Asia. Nor did the fumes of this enthusiastic zeal evaporate

evaporate at once: The frenzy was as lasting as it was extravagant. During two centuries Europe seemed to have no object but to recover or keep possession of the holy land; and through that period vast armies continued to march thither: And some authors say, above 2,000,000 of those enthusiasts perished in these expeditions. It is certain that vast numbers were slain, great multitudes died with sickness, and but a very small part of all the armies which were raised and sent to this holy war ever returned home again. And after all the conquests they made, they were obliged at last to quit all again to the mahometans." As the greater part of these armies were transported by sea, their destruction is very naturally represented by the sea becoming as the blood of a dead man, and the death of every creature in the sea.

VIAL III.] After this, "the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood." By the foregoing cup of divine wrath the sea was turned into blood; but here the rivers and fountains become blood; which signifies great slaughter, but not so universal as the former. Bloody wars are to be carried on within the antichristian territories, in the cities, and provinces, which are the streams and sources of power and wealth.

Accordingly we find, in the history of the times following the crusades, there was a famous rupture between the emperors and the popes, on account of the right of investiture into bishoprics and other ecclesiastical preferments. The emperors claimed the right of investiture as part of their royal prerogative; and the popes on the other hand insisted that

that this right belonged to the pontifical authority. Upon this dispute their subjects in all parts formed themselves into two parties, one on the side of the popes to maintain their authority, who were distinguished by the name of Guelphs; and the other for the emperors, who were called Gibellines. These parties raged against each other with incessant fury, and not only eagerly insisted in the armies raised by the contending heads of each faction, but every where broke out in violent mobs, and massacred each other without mercy. All the cities, villages, and families, in all the provinces, were miserably harassed with insurrections and murders; besides many bloody battles fought from time to time in this quarrel. So great was the distress of Italy and Rome by the imperial arms, that the popes were obliged at length to take refuge in France, where they kept their courts seventy years. This remarkable quarrel continued above one hundred and fifty years, during which time the subjects of the anti-christian empire were continually slaying one another.

A special reason for this judgment is given in the vision, by a voice which came from the angel of the waters, *i. e.* from the angel which brought this plague on the waters, saying, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shall be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." To which another angel makes this response from the altar, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." This very much resembles the judgment under the second seal, by which the great enemies

emies of the gospel, the Jews and Romans who had persecuted and slain the saints, were excited to kill one another. The reason given for the plague of this vial greatly confirms the application of it to the contest between the emperors and popes, in the thirteenth century. For just before these bloody wars among the subjects of the beast, Pope Innocent the third sent his legates to suppress the Albigenses and Waldenses, on account of the doctrines of Christ which they held. He also erected the court of inquisition to root them out. He then published a crusade against them, by which they were massacred in great multitudes. Thus Antichrist shed the blood of saints in great abundance, and was justly retaliated according to his crime. They who had joined in putting to death so many thousands of saints, were in the righteous judgment of God made to drink blood by each others hands. About the year 1371 these murderous factions ceased, and the popes returned again to Rome; this therefore may be considered as the end of the plague of this vial.

VIAL IV.] Then “the fourth angel poured out his vial on the sun, and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: And they repented not to give him glory.” The heavenly bodies are natural emblems of the ruling powers of the political system, and are so used in these visions. The darkening of the sun, and the other luminaries of heaven commonly signifies trouble, perplexity, and diminution of the honor and power of the princes of the world. On the contrary therefore, the increase of the sun’s heat, to be intolerably intense,

intense, naturally suggests the idea of great vexation occasioned by violent exertions of despotic power. And as all these plagues are peculiar to the antichristian empire ; the sun is that power which is at the head of it. But in the empire of Antichrist civil and ecclesiastical power are intimately mixed and blended together : The pope is the proper and sole head of the latter ; and the emperors and kings of the several nations are at the head of the former, among which the emperor of Germany has the chief place ; though all are under the management of the pope, on whom the image of the former empire depends. Therefore the effect of this vial upon the sun most probably signifies, some distressing judgments occasioned by the exercise of high authority among these powers, the effects of their pride, covetousness, and jarring interests.

Now the events of Providence which most remarkably correspond to this vial both in their nature and the order of time, are the hot contentions about the papacy which prevailed from about the year 1380 to the time of the protestant reformation. During this period many wars and great distresses were brought on the papal empire by the ambition and envy of the popes, who with vehement zeal strove to maintain the power they had gained. A great schism began this period. One pope was set up in opposition to another. For many years two popes claimed the supremacy at the same time ; and sometimes three popes were advanced against each other, all supported by different parties, and violent in their struggles for victory. Council after council was called to no other effect but to widen the breach, while the several potentates were hotly engaged

engaged in supporting one or another. And when this great breach was made up, which lasted above sixty years, still the ambition of the popes kept a fire in all the surrounding kingdoms. To maintain and increase their power they employed every secret artifice, and every method of open force. They fomented quarrels among princes and neighbouring kingdoms, and kept the world in a continual flame even to the reign of the emperor Charles V, when the reformation from popery took place. They who read Dr. Robertson's history of that reign will have full evidence of the intrigues of the popes, and how deeply they were concerned in all the wars then carried on. Thus the bishop of Rome, whom the kings and nations of the earth had exalted as their head, and whom they adored as the sun of the empire, tormented them with his heat, and made them feel the insufferable effects of his high authority.

The declaration in this vision, "That men blasphemed the name of God which hath power over these plagues, and repented not to give him glory," is equally verified in the history of those times. For instead of being awakened to see their gross errors and superstitions by these vexations which they suffered, and giving glory to God by returning to the practice of evangelical religion, they grew blinder, more profane and idolatrous, and more immoral than ever. That very period when this judgment prevailed is remarkable in history for being the most ignorant, superstitious, and dissolute of all the ages of the empire of the beast.

VIAL V.] The fifth angel then "poured out his vial upon the seat, or *throne*, of the beast; and his kingdom

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was full of darkness : And they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." One of the last plagues of Egypt, immediately preceding that by which the deliverance of Israel was effected, was a miraculous darkness over the whole land. This vial brings a like plague on the antichristian empire, very near the time of its destruction. But it is directed more especially against the *throne* of the beast, or that supreme authority which he maintains. The design of this vial therefore seems to be, in a peculiar manner to obstruct, confound, and weaken that power which he has assumed. And so the darkness over his whole kingdom signifies, great embarrassments and confusion in the counsels of the pope, and the management of those affairs on which the support of his kingdom depends, so that his subjects should not know how to move ; or what methods to take in order to extricate themselves from their gloomy situation, but would be ready to bite their tongues with vexation and anguish of spirit, while they still felt the sores bred in the constitution and remaining incurable. Nevertheless, this judgment produces no conviction of their monstrous absurdities, and blasphemous tenets ; but instead of being excited to fear the God of heaven, and worship him in truth, on the contrary they blaspheme him the more for their pains and sores.

According to the natural series of these vials, as they have hitherto been explained, we have been conducted as far as the time of Luther, or the beginning of the sixteenth century : And this vial may
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be considered as coinciding with the resurrection of the witnesses in the eleventh chapter. And the application of this vial to the circumstances of the papal empire, at and since that time, will not appear unnatural and forced, when we consider that though the clear light of truth then shined into the minds of the protestant reformers, they who would not unite with them were involved in thicker darkness than ever, and thrown into the greatest perplexity and vexation of spirit. This distinction was very similar to that between the Egyptians and Israelites: The latter enjoyed the brightness of day, while the former could not stir out of their places by reason of the darkness: The pope and his adherents were alarmed and stood amazed at the preaching of the reformers. His throne was attacked, his authority denied and despised, and his whole empire threatened with destruction; yet he could find no way to prevent the spreading of those principles which struck directly against the whole doctrine and form of his corrupt religion, and usurped empire. When the pope armed the kings which were his vassals against the protestants, these forces failed of success. When he thundered his anathemas, they had lost their terror. Secret plots and intrigues were ineffectual. All the councils of the papacy were full of darkness, and they knew not which way to take one step for the security of their power. Notwithstanding all their policy and malice the reformation was spreading. And when they had summoned together all their strength in the great council of Trent, in order to fix their tyranny upon a firmer basis, and establish the grossest doctrines, and boldest claims, the authority of that council was of no avail against the powerful ar-

guments which shook the papal throne. The papists felt the utmost anguish while they observed the reformation spreading from country to country, and the cause of superstition every where in danger and declining. Many princes in Europe learnt to look up to the pope's power with less veneration, and resumed their prerogatives, as sovereigns in their own dominions, which had been for many centuries wrested out of their hands. And from that time the popedom has been under a great gloom, and still feels inward anguish at the inefficacy of its power. The subjects of the beast are ready to gnaw their tongues with pain when they find themselves unable to vindicate their religion from reproach, and observe their power continually growing weaker: Yet they are as obstinate in error, as idolatrous and enslaved to ecclesiastical impositions, as ever.

Thus in the series of these vials we are brought along to the present century, and may soon expect the effects of the two remaining vials. Therefore we can no longer have the advantage of confirming our interpretations by historical facts: And if recent occurrences should belong to the next vial, there is a difficulty in observing and applying them, arising from the nearness of the view; for all objects require a certain distance from the eye in order to clear and distinct vision, and a proper observation of the parts. Yet with humble diffidence of our own reasonings, and dependence on God to enlighten our minds, we may endeavour to find the most easy and natural signification of prophecies relating to things not yet accomplished.

VIAL VI.] "The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof

thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." Expositors have been of various opinions as to the meaning of "drying up the waters of the Euphrates," and "making way for the kings of the east." But omitting many conjectures we may fix our thoughts on the words of the prophecy, and explain them by other parts of scripture, and the figures often used in this book.

Now it is observable that the capital of the empire of Antichrist is repeatedly called Babylon in this revelation. It is called by this name in the 14th chapter; and again very particularly described in the 17th chapter; and the destruction of it is represented in the 18th chapter. The name Babylon is figurative and mystical: Rome is the city really meant. Therefore to shew the preparation to be made in divine Providence for the destruction of Rome, figures are used which are taken from circumstances attending the capture of the ancient Babylon, that uniformity may be observed in the vision. Ancient Babylon was taken by Cyrus, a celebrated king from the eastern side of the Euphrates, by diverting the course of that river, which ran through the midst of the city, and both supplied it with water, and served for a defence. The channel of the river was dried, and Cyrus marched his army through: He found the gates next the channel negligently left open, and suddenly entered with his forces and took possession of the city before the guards could be alarmed. In some manner similar to this we are led to suppose Rome will fall from its glory. As the river Euphrates was dried up for the passage of the army of Cyrus, so those sources of wealth, support, and defence on which

Rome depends shall fail her, and the way will be prepared for the kings, who are to effect her ruin, to make their attack with success. It is no more necessary to suppose, these kings must come from a country eastward of Rome because they are called, "the kings of the east," than it is to take Babylon or the river Euphrates in a literal sense. We are plainly informed in the 17th chapter what kings are to be employed in destroying the great harlot, the city and church of Rome. They are the ten horns of the roman empire, or the several kingdoms with their kings into which the empire was divided at the time when the second beast, or the antichristian power, arose; the very kings who at first agreed in one creed, and gave their power to the beast. These kings will at length entirely change their minds, and become the most zealous enemies to that ecclesiastical empire which they themselves had established. They will find out that Rome has caused insurrections against them, and fomented rebellions and seditions, and that the religion they have promoted has drained away their wealth, encouraged and multiplied drones in society, and impoverished and diminished their subjects. Therefore they will hate the whore, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. In order to this execution of vengeance, the river of wealth, which was continually flowing through Rome and the church of which it is the metropolis, will be dried up, so that she can no longer be supported in her grandeur, or defended from attacks. Many streams of this great river have already been dried. Vast revenues which the popes formerly received from every kingdom have been greatly diminished by

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by the protestant reformation. And when the kingdoms still under the yoke of Antichrist shall become sensible of the many impositions to which they are subjected, and the great detriments they suffer by that blasphemous beast which they have hitherto worshipped, the channel of wealth will be wholly dried, and Rome open to its enemies. Moreover, when the church of Rome loses its establishment, and is no longer mixed with the civil polity of the kingdoms, her sources of strength, as well as wealth will be cut off, and the way prepared for her utter ruin. Likewise, the dissolution of the numerous orders of ecclesiastics in the several kingdoms, which have been as the gates and bars of Rome adjacent to the great river of wealth and support, will leave her exposed to a sudden assault which may at once bring down all her power. Of this we have already seen some apparent approaches, in the total suppression of the order of jesuits, and the methods taken in several roman catholic kingdoms for the abolition of convents. The jesuits furnished great numbers of the most strenuous, artful, and learned defenders of the romish church. They watched every motion inimical to Rome, guarded against every attack of her doctrines or authority, and firmly opposed, or secretly counteracted, all the policy and power of princes derogatory to the honor of the papacy. The banishment of the jesuits from all nations of Europe, and the dissolution of the order, as guilty of treasons, rebellions, and assassinations of monarchs, is a most remarkable event in providence; and this, together with the suppression of convents, may naturally be considered among

the things signified by the sixth vial. And if this observation is just, this vial is now taking effect.

Immediately after this St. John "saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." To which this interpretation is subjoined, "for they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Here the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, are represented as three distinct agents, but all concurring in one cause, to send out emissaries to the kings of the earth. It appears by the 12th, and the beginning of the 13th chapter, that the dragon is the devil; and that he was the invisible founder of the roman empire, and made use of it as a political machine which he moved at his own pleasure, to persecute and destroy the true church of God. He did not ~~lose~~ his property in the empire, when the second beast became the last head, but still retained his power over it, and with great additional advantage, by making Antichrist a more effectual tool of his malice. The false prophet is named as one of the three agents; and this is the first time of meeting with this name: But we meet with it again joined with the beast, in the 19th chapter, where he is described as *having wrought miracles before the beast*; by which it appears that the false prophet is the same with the second beast in the 13th chapter, of which the same thing is said. Therefore the *devil*, the empire of Rome, or the old beast, in its last revived state, and Antichrist, or the pope as the ecclesiastical head and supreme manager

manager of the revived beast, appear in a distinct view, acting together in this crisis of their affairs. Each of them sends out of his mouth an unclean spirit, i. e. they join in sending out emissaries, who have no regard to any moral principle, but are prepared to execute their orders by any falsehoods, or base artifices, which may best answer the vile purpose. These emissaries are therefore compared to frogs for their low and slippery practices, and the alertness and sedulity with which they pursue their business ; especially because like the frogs of Egypt, they will insinuate themselves into every apartment. They are said to be three, not to limit them to this precise number, but only in conformity to the number of the chief agents ; as the seven spirits of God are mentioned, in the beginning of these prophecies, only by way of accommodation to the seven churches. The three unclean spirits therefore signify, in general, a number of emissaries, sent out with the spirit of the devil, and of Antichrist in his double capacity of an imperial and ecclesiastical head. They are sent to the kings of the earth, to collect their forces in defence of the empire of the beast and the false prophet.

Therefore we may understand this part of the vision as a plain intimation, that the power of antichristian Rome will not be subdued and overthrown without some strenuous efforts to save herself from destruction. When she sees preparation making against her on every side, she will employ every diabolical art in order to unite the civil powers under her management, and all the powers of the hierarchy, for her own defence : And for this purpose will send emissaries into all parts of her

empire ; who will go out with the subtilty and rage of the infernal spirit, and with high pretensions, as prophets of God, engaged in his cause, to excite insurrections and rebellions in kingdoms where civil and religious liberty is asserted, threatening all who refuse their assistance with the vengeance of the pope, and even the miraculous vengeance of heaven. Thus they will every where delude multitudes, and gather together a numerous army to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

This battle of the great day of God Almighty seems to be the same with that more particularly described in the 19th chapter, which gives the finishing blow to Antichrist and his empire. This preparation is making some time before, but Rome falls before the decisive engagement comes on. Whether this will be a literal or metaphorical battle cannot be determined until the prophecy is fulfilled ; but probably armies will really be raised for the support of the sinking cause of the papacy, in opposition to the kings and their kingdoms, who endeavour to annihilate that tyranny.

All are warned to prepare for that great day of battle, which in some respects will resemble the last great day of judgment. "Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." Christ declares that his coming to execute the last vengeance on the beast and false prophet will be as sudden and surprising as his final appearing ; and intimates that the decision of that battle will be very important, by warning all to watch and prepare themselves, and take heed of being surprised and stript of the garments of their profession, so as

to

to appear naked with respect to the proper clothing and ornaments of christianity, faith, love, righteousness, and truth, and be made ashamed of hypocritical pretensions to religion.

The armies raised by the pope's emissaries are said to be "gathered together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon," *i. e. the mountain of Megiddo*, or as some have interpreted the word, *the slaughter of Megiddo*. Megiddo was a city of the tribe of Manasseh, famous for the defeat of the army of Sisera, and the slaughter of Ahaziah and Joram by Jehu, as also of king Josiah by Pharaoh Necho; and therefore it seems to be used proverbially by the prophet Zechariah as a place of great mourning.—" * In that day shall there be a great mourning at Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."—It is not probable that the design of the vision is to point out any particular place by the name of Armageddon, for it is not a modern, but an Hebrew name; but the general signification of the name is all that is intended. Therefore we may take the general meaning to be this, that whatever armies are gathered together for the support of the empire of Antichrist, and in whatever place the great battle may be fought, they will be defeated and destroyed, so that it shall be a place of mourning, memorable for great slaughter. But it is observable, that this vial does not actually bring on the battle, but extends only to the preparation of this mighty army of the false prophet, and forming it into a body. The 19th chapter gives a representation of this battle.

VIAL

* Zech. xii. 11.

VIAL VII.] Then "the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air: And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings: And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great." The preceding vials affected the earth, the sea, the rivers, the sun, and the throne of the beast. This is poured into the air, which may be considered as the range of Satan, who is called by St. Paul, "the prince of the power of the air," because he has the superintendency of all the children of disobedience in this lower world, and has access every where for the accomplishment of his designs. This may signify that the judgment of this vial will be more especially directed against that power which Satan has exercised over the kingdoms of this world, so that he shall be cast down from his high and universal throne, and no longer be able to maintain his empire and defend it from impending ruin. The voice proceeding from the temple and throne of God, saying, "It is done," is a declaration from God, that this vial shall finish the great work designed, *i. e.* the destruction of the great city and the whole empire of the beast. Therefore this vial perfectly corresponds with the seventh trumpet in the eleventh chapter, and brings on the same events. The circumstances both there and here are the very same; the temple of God in heaven appears open, and lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail follow. These denote the majesty and power attending the voice of God, the approbation of his judgments sounded through heaven,

heaven, and the astonishing revolutions which take place in the world. The mighty earthquake especially, which far exceeds all that ever were felt upon earth, signifies a most tremendous shock given both to the political and ecclesiastical system of Antichrist, which brings on the dissolution of that complicated empire.

Accordingly it follows, "The great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell : And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." By the earthquake the great city, figuratively called Babylon, *i. e.* Rome, was violently rent asunder through its very centre, and divided into three parts, so that it could stand no longer, but every part was ready to be swallowed up. All parts of the dominions of Rome were also involved in the like calamity, the cities of the nations fell off from her authority, and suffered the same revolution. And in remembrance of the repeated assurance given to the afflicted saints that their blood should be avenged, God determined to execute his judgments on Rome without farther delay.

This great judgment has such resemblance of the final dissolution of all things, that it is said, "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." Which denotes that the whole system of superstition, idolatry, and tyranny were abolished, on the continent and beyond the seas, so that no remains of the empire of the beast could any where be seen.

In order to accomplish this utter destruction of the empire of the beast, and as one of the judgments

ments by which it should be effected, "there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent, *i. e.* near an hundred pounds. This alludes to the plague of hail sent upon Egypt; and to the miraculous destruction of the five kings of Canaan who went up to war against Gibeon, upon whom great hailstones fell down from heaven when they fled before Joshua. In these prophecies the judgment of hail commonly signifies great wars and concomitant calamities; therefore here it may signify that the empire of Antichrist will be destroyed by most remarkable storms of war on every side.

But it is farther said, "Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail: For the plague thereof was exceeding great." This plainly signifies, that all these judgments, even to the very last, would not bring the deluded vassals of Antichrist to repentance, and therefore their destruction was inevitable. Instead of being convinced of their errors and impieties, they would utter the more enraged blasphemies; and so persisting in superstition, profaneness, and idolatry, would shew themselves ripe for complete and everlasting ruin. It is probable that when the ruin of the papacy draws near, the zealots of that party will be bolder and higher than ever in exclaiming against the truth, and asserting the blasphemous power of Rome.

SCENE

SCENE III.—CHAP. XVII.

A Description of the great HARLOT, and an Explanation of the Emblem, as signifying Antichristian Rome, called by the mystical Name of Babylon.

THE preceding vision hath shewed us by what a succession of plagues the overthrow of the empire of the beast and false prophet is to be brought on ; and a general view is given of its utter destruction. But now, before we have a particular account of the ruin of the great city Babylon, another vision is interposed, to shew what that power is which is to be destroyed, and what city is meant by Babylon the metropolis of this power ; and to inform us of the meaning of several circumstances in the preceding visions.

For this purpose, one of the seven angels which had the seven vials came and talked with St. John, saying, “ Come hither, I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth upon many waters ; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” It is said of Babylon, in the 14th chapter, that she made all nations drink of the wine of her raging fornication. The very same is said of this great whore, and therefore she is that same city mystically called Babylon, and indeed she is expressly called by this name in the 5th verse of the present chapter.

Immediately after this call, St. John was transported in vision into the wilderness, and there saw a
woman

woman sitting" upon a scarlet colored beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads, and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication." The woman which now appears sitting on the beast is the same which the angel had called the great whore, which is the city mystically called Babylon, as has been already observed. The beast on which she is seated is evidently the same with the first beast described in the 13th chapter : And he appears here of a scarlet color, to shew that he belongs to the red dragon as his political body, and also to denote that he is a bloody persecuting power. And farther to shew that this beast is the very same with that first beast, besides the seven heads and ten horns which agree to both, this is full of names of blasphemy ; so on the heads of the other was the name of blasphemy, and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. The woman is clothed in purple and scarlet, the rich colors of emperors and kings ; and adorned with gold and costly jewels, which indicate her to be an imperial city, abounding in wealth, and commanding the traffic of the world. In her hand she holds a golden cup containing an abominable mixture as an enchanting potion, to intoxicate and bewitch the nations that they may commit fornication with her, and to tempt them with the gold.

On the forehead of this infamous harlot was a very remarkable inscription of her name and character.

ter. "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." It is observed by commentators, that anciently lewd women had their names written over their doors, and sometimes in labels on their foreheads; and that criminals among the Romans had an inscription of their crimes carried before them. To this custom the inscription on the forehead of this harlot may allude: Or it may be designed as a reverse of that inscription on the forehead of the high priest of the jewish church, HOLINESS TO THE LORD, to intimate that a church is to be understood in connexion with a city, a church, with an high priest as its head, whose character is abominable instead of being holy. The name of this prostitute is MYSTERY; for she is a mystery of iniquity which can hardly be traced, and practiseth the most mysterious arts to maintain her grandeur and delude men into her idolatries, and her name and character is enigmatical, a mystery which requires wisdom in the interpretation. Her name BABYLON THE GREAT is mystical, given her only as the antitype of ancient Babylon, which she resembles in every kind of idolatry, and oppression of God's people. In both these she so far exceeds, that she may with peculiar propriety be called BABYLON THE GREAT. She is the MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH; for she invents and propagates all manner of superstitions, and is the author of the greatest abominations practised in the world under pretence of religion.

While

While St. John was observing this harlot, "he saw she was drunk;" not with wine, but with blood; with the "blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: And when he saw her, he wondered with great admiration." The sight was very astonishing in every view, and he could not understand the meaning of this strange appearance. Therefore the angel to relieve him from his astonishment, calls him to attend while he explained this great mystery of the woman, and of the beast which carries her.

In the first place the angel gives a general account of the beast on which the woman was seated, only so far as to make it plain that this is the same beast which had been seen in a former vision, without repeating all the circumstances; or rather both those beasts now united; and to shew that his authority is universal, over all hypocritical professors. "The beast which thou sawest was and is not and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." The *beast was*; for the civil empire of Rome was in being long before this vision, as it was to continue long after. The *beast is not*; for it appears in the former vision wounded to death in one of its heads, as if an end was put to its existence. And yet the *beast is*; for when it seemed to be mortally wounded and dead, another beast arose out of the earth, as if out of the mouth of the bottomless pit, joined himself with the former, served the purpose of a new head, and gave him new life and activity. The
ascending

ascending of this second beast is declared to St. John as an event at a distance, but of melancholy consideration to the church, he "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit;" and therefore this consolation is added, that he will go *into perdition*. The same consolation is given in the 13th chapter, "He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity. He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." At the revival of the beast, it is said, "they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." So it is said in the 13th chapter, "all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the beast. All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The meaning is, that when the old empire of Rome is revived, and rendered active by union with the second beast, which serves as a new head, the christian world will gaze upon it with admiration and superstitious homage, and all willingly become subjects of this new power who are not registered among Christ's true people, as having characters distinguished in all the scriptures from careless professors of religion, even from the beginning of the world.

After this the angel proceeds to an interpretation of the seven heads and ten horns of the beast: But prefaces it with an intimation, that the strictest attention of a wise and understanding mind is necessary in order to the clear knowledge of these mysterious emblems; and that all who desire this knowledge must hearken and learn. He then says, "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which

the woman sitteth." And adds another interpretation of them as signifying "seven kings:" For the same emblem may convey a double idea. By the first interpretation the city, of which this woman is the emblem, is described. She is called "Babylon the great," in the 5th verse; but this is a mystical or figurative name. Her real name therefore is now intimated by her being seated on seven mountains, or hills. This most plainly points out Rome, which was so famous for being built on seven hills, that this is the description of it in the most celebrated classic authors. Ovid in particular describes it by this peculiar situation, in the following distich:

—* Quæ de septem, totum circumspicit orbem,
Montibus, Imperii Roma Deumque locus.

Which may be literally translated thus,

Rome the chief seat of empire and the gods
Which from seven hills looks round and views the globe.

From this it is evident, that this woman, or the great city repeatedly called Babylon in these visions, is the great city Rome. And that no doubt may remain, the angel adds a farther description in the last verse of this chapter, which cannot be applied to any other city.

But here this observation may justly be made, that this city Rome is to be considered as the capital of a mixed empire, the revived empire of old Rome managed by the second beast as a false prophet, or a new head assuming an extraordinary sacred character. It is the metropolis of a church blended with the civil powers, a church which, instead of being the chaste spouse of Christ, is become corrupt, idolatrous, guilty of all kinds of abominations, and

* Ovid. Trist. lib. 1. Eleg. 4.

and charged with the lewdness of a most impudent public harlot, who has intoxicated all the kings and people of the earth by the wine of her fornication. The jewish church * is described as a woman, a shameless harlot, by the prophets of the Old Testament, when she had corrupted herself with the idolatries of her heathen neighbours, and all the vices consequent upon her forsaking that religion which God had instituted. So Rome, as the seat of a church called by the name of Christ, and yet apostatized to idolatrous worship similar to that of the Jews, and abounding in superstition and wickedness, instead of adhering to the pure worship and obedience of the gospel, is characterised as the "*Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.*" She is also a most notorious persecutor of the saints; for she is represented as "drunken with the blood of the martyrs, or witnesses of Jesus." By her management of the civil powers she has made war upon the saints, and overcome them, and killed all who refused submission to her authority. The church of which Rome is the metropolis, is that same woman who in the 12th chapter represents the church of God in its purest state; who was persecuted by the dragon in the height of his power, acting by the Pagan emperors; and who fled into the wilderness after she was taken up on the two wings of the old empire, i. e. supported by the authority of the western and eastern emperors. Being thus supported she soon mixed with the world, and was lost as in a wilderness. Therefore St. John is now carried away in the spirit into the wilderness to see her. But how changed in her form from what she was before! Her glorious robe

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of

* Jer. iii. and Ezek. xxiii.

of light, and all her ornaments of apostolic truth and purity are gone, and she appears dressed in the pomp and splendor of worldly grandeur ! And instead of depending on the wings of the civil powers to bear her up with tender concern for her danger and weakness, she is now boldly mounted on their backs, and compels them to carry her which way soever she pleases ! Behold a church riding an empire ! She has cast off her fidelity to Christ, and played the harlot with a multitude of lovers ; and therefore Christ has cast her off and doomed her to destruction.

That the same emblem may convey a double idea appears from what has been said of this harlot, for a woman is the proper emblem both of a city and a church ; and it is confirmed by the double interpretation which the angel gives of the seven heads of the beast. He has said, they " are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth : " And now he adds, " And there are seven kings ; Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come ; and when he cometh he must continue a short space. " By this interpretation we have sure marks by which the beast, or empire intended may be known, as well as by the description of Rome the capital city. By seven kings the angel cannot mean simply seven particular kings reigning in succession one after another : For an empire that has but seven kings in succession, and no other ruling powers, must be of short duration, and quite unworthy of being represented by such a formidable beast. But the heads of this beast, being the heads of one empire, must mean so many distinguishable ruling powers over the empire : And that these must not be supposed to

to exist together at the same time is evident from the absurdity of the supposition. No government can be managed by seven ruling powers at once, each having distinct and supreme command ; as no man can serve two masters. Indeed, this heavenly interpreter clearly settles this matter, for he says, " Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come." In St. John's time five of these ruling powers were past and gone, like so many heads fallen off : One then existed, which was the sixth : And another was afterward to come, and to continue but a short space. It is not of very great importance whether the five forms of government over the Roman empire which were past in St. John's time can be precisely ascertained or not : We are assured so many heads were fallen. But the Roman historians remarkably agree in reckoning this very number. Livy says, * The Roman empire " at first was under kings, then consuls, and dictators, decemvirs, and tribunes with consular power." Tacitus likewise gives much the same enumeration, " † Kings first had the power over Rome ; then Lucius Brutus established liberty and the consular authority ; the power of the decemvirs was short, not continuing above two years ; and the consular power of the military tribunes was also soon at an end ; after this the government of Cinna and Sylla was short ; and the power of Pompey and Crassus at length was terminated in Julius Cesar ; and finally the arms of Lepidus and Anthony yielded to Augustus, who took all the affairs of the city, quite wearied with civil discords, under his government with the name of prince," *i. e.* emperor. If we take the particular names which he hastily mentions before Augus-

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tus

* Liv. Hist. lib. vi. chap. 1. † Tac. Ann. lib. i. in initio.

tus as expressive of the dictatorial authority or a confusion of power, this enumeration of Tacitus will very well agree with that of Livy ; and both may serve to confirm the number of heads which the angel mentions as fallen. We are, however, sure that the governing power over Rome at the time of the vision, viz. the imperial, was the sixth, and that a seventh was to come after the imperial, but to be of short continuance.

All the writers on this book have met with great difficulty in determining what new governing power of the empire is meant by the seventh head. Some have supposed the christian emperors to be intended : Because they look upon it dishonorable to christianity to reckon them with the Pagan emperors as the same head of the beast, and consider the remarkable change from an heathen to a christian government as equivalent to an entire change of the power itself. But against this it may be objected, that the proper authority of the christian emperors was precisely the same with that of their Pagan predecessors, however differently they might exercise it ; and it does not appear that the design of the vision was to point out any other than the ruling powers which were of distinct forms as to government. And it may farther be objected, that the christian emperors reigned much too long to be called a short space ; for they continued nearly one hundred and sixty years, a full proportion of time with the other heads. Moreover, St. Paul says—“ * He that letteth [*i. e.* hinders] will let, until he be taken out of the way ; and then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall con-

sume

* 2 Thess. ii. 7, 8.

sume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Now that which then hindered the appearing and tyranny of Antichrist was the imperial power of Rome. Therefore, if the heathen emperors only are to be considered as the power which hindered, they were taken away in the year 320, and from thence the appearance of Antichrist may be dated; which is no honor to the christian emperors. But then the twelve hundred and sixty years, to which his reign is limited, would have ended two hundred years ago, contrary to what we now well know. Therefore the most judicious writers have given up that opinion, and agree that the sixth head includes the whole succession of emperors, christian as well as heathen.

Mr. Lowman and others consider the exarchate of Ravenna as the seventh and last form of government, immediately preceding the appearance of Antichrist. But some weighty objections may be made to this opinion. In the first place, there was a long space of time between the end of the imperial power, which expired in the year 476, and the establishment of the exarchate of Ravenna, which was not effected till A. D. 568. This vision gives no intimation of so long an interval in the succession of the heads, which always before followed immediately after each other. But an objection still more weighty is this, that the empire described in this vision is that of which *Rome* is the capital city, and which is connected with a *church* which is blasphemous and an harlot, *i. e.* idolatrous, openly opposed to the truth of the gospel, and a cruel persecutor of the saints. It must therefore be the

western empire ; for Constantinople was the capital of the eastern : And it must be the western church, because it is seated at Rome, and all the above characters plainly belong to it ; but are not equally applicable to the eastern or Greek church. It is the church of Rome which has combined with the civil powers of the ten kingdoms, and ruled the nations with an authority resembling that of the former Roman empire. Now the exarchate cannot with the least propriety be reckoned one of the heads of the western empire ; for it belonged to the empire of Constantinople, and Rome was only included in it as a small dutchy, all its former magistracies being entirely dissolved, and not so much as the shadow of the ancient government remaining ; which Mr. Lowman himself acknowledges. Lastly : It is not an inconsiderable objection against reckoning the exarchate as the seventh head, that the angel passes very transiently over this head, and says, “ when he cometh he shall continue a short space.” But Rome continued under the exarchate near two hundred years, viz. from A. D. 568, to 752.

Let these visions direct our judgment in this matter, while we hear what the angel farther says. Immediately after mentioning an head not yet come, which was to continue a short space, he goes on and says, “ The beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.” Here is something very enigmatical, to which we ought most carefully to attend. Though it is said, “ the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth,” it would be absurd to understand this of that beast to which the seven heads properly

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properly belong ; as if the body of that beast could become one of its own heads. The seven headed beast, as we have seen in the 13th chapter, is the old civil empire of Rome, and cannot be viewed as an head to itself. But it is very observable in that chapter that the second beast, who acts the part of a prophet, plainly gives new life to the first beast after the mortal wound, and exercises all his power before him, or in his presence ; and indeed becomes so united with him as to speak for him, and actuate him, and procure him greater reverence and homage than ever. The second beast being now so blended with the first, both may be considered as one beast, and therefore the head of the second becomes a head of the first, and governs the whole as one body. In this view the angel's meaning is, that the ecclesiastical power of Rome, of which the pope is the head, assuming the management of the civil powers, to keep up an extensive empire over the nations similar to the old empire, shall become another head to the former beast in the succession.

But a difficulty still remains, in the angel's calling this last head the eighth, and yet saying, " he is of the seven." He proposed to explain the meaning of the seven heads of the beast : Seven have been already mentioned ; this is said to be the eighth, which exceeds the number ; but there is some particular way of reckoning by which he may be numbered among the seven. The only easy way of solving this difficulty is to understand the angel as if he had said, " There will indeed be another ruling power over Rome, when the present imperial power, which is the sixth, is brought to its end : But it will be so remarkably different from the foregoing

going in many respects, the empire itself will be so curtailed and reduced to a weak dying state, and this governing power of so short continuance, that it scarcely merits to be reckoned among the seven heads. But while this last civil power rules, another shall begin to make its appearance ; that second beast, which is the antichristian power of Rome, shall gain even greater authority than the seventh civil head, and extend his power over all the nations which composed the old empire. This authority will be retained and increased until he reigns supreme head over the church and all the civil powers. Therefore if the last civil power is numbered among the seven heads, to complete so many forms of the old empire in a civil view, then the antichristian power of Rome will be the eighth, which goes beyond the proposed number. But if this last mentioned power is considered as shewing himself, and exerting high authority at the very same time when the seventh civil head reigns, and in many respects rising above him, then Antichrist may properly be called the seventh head of the roman empire. Thus he is either the seventh or eighth in different views."

This interpretation is verified in the history of those times. When the Goths took Rome and deposed Augustulus A. D. 476, the imperial authority of Rome was at an end, and he who hindered the appearance of the man of sin, or the papal power, according to St. Paul's prophecy, was taken out of the way. Still Rome was viewed as the capital of an empire, however dismembered by the barbarous nations who were establishing their kingdoms in many parts of it. The kings of the Goths became
kings

kings of Rome and its remaining territories ; but fixed their seat at Ravenna. Yet they were so generous to the Romans, that they permitted them to govern themselves by their own laws and forms of magistracy, to which they were strongly attached ; reserving to the gothic kings the rights of sovereignty. Thus there remained some appearance of the former empire in the government continued at Rome. But it was not long before the Romans began to quarrel among themselves about elections of magistrates and other civil matters ; and they often carried their contentions to such extremes as to expose themselves to chastisement by the gothic kings. By this time the bishops of Rome had an high rank of honor among the greatest characters, and were held in great veneration. They had extended their authority to all the churches in the western empire, and were attempting to exercise the same command over all the churches in the east. Therefore as often as the city was thrown into confusion by wranglings in civil matters, the bishop of Rome was consulted, and great respect paid to his advice. From advising he soon began to dictate, and interpose in all public regulations, so that the Romans after a few years were governed more by their bishop than their king. Thus Antichrist made his appearance, while the seventh civil form of government took place. The words which the angel adds, after his description of this antichristian head, are designed to assure the saints, that how high soever this power should rise, though it would be formidable, cruel, and of long continuance, it is doomed to perdition, and shall sink at last into the bottomless pit from whence it came.

The

The interpretation of the ten horns is next given by the angel. "The ten horns which thou sawest, are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast." When these horns are said to be *ten kings*, we are to understand by them *ten kingdoms*: but it is not necessary to fix these at that precise number of ten; for this number may be used in a more lax sense, for an uncertain, yet considerable number: So Jacob says to Laban, "thou hast changed my wages ten times;" and the same way of speaking is frequent in common conversation. When the horns are said to receive power as kings *one hour* with the beast, every person acquainted with the idiom of the Greek language knows, that this expression does not signify the duration of one precise hour, but is equivalent to saying, *at one and the same time*. The meaning therefore is, that at the very same time when the seventh head of the beast, *i. e.* Antichrist, shall appear, the old Roman empire shall be divided and broken into a number of kingdoms which had no existence before. The great Newton, who, besides his prodigious improvements in philosophy, took great pains in studying the scriptures of the prophets, reckons up the precise number of ten kingdoms into which the empire was broken when it came to its end*. But as the ten kingdoms are presently mentioned again as remaining at the time when this head is to be destroyed, and as the very instruments of his destruction; and because these particular kingdoms have been changing from time to time into others, until the nations of Europe have assumed their present form; it seems more suitable to the design of the vision to

understand

* Sir Isaac Newton Observ. on Proph. p. 47.

understand by the *ten kingdoms*, many in the general sense, though indeed they now make about the number of ten noted kingdoms.

It is moreover said of these kingdoms, "These have one mind," [γνώμην, gnomēn, system of sentiment, or creed] "and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: For he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called and chosen and faithful." Here we are informed how Antichrist was to gain that uncontrollable and universal authority which bears so complete resemblance to the extensive power of ancient Rome. It would be obtained by the agreement of the ten kings and their kingdoms in the Roman system of religion. They all would receive the sentiments of Rome, acknowledge the supremacy of her bishop, and with one consent give their whole force and authority to him to support his empire over the nations, and devote themselves to his service: And so, though his own proper territories might be quite inconsiderable, he would have the command of all these kingdoms, and unite his supreme ecclesiastical authority with the empire of the world. In all his bloody wars against the faithful subjects of Christ, these kings would be employed as his assistants; and when he summonses all his strength to make the last effort to maintain his authority, he will collect his forces from these kingdoms, and Christ will conquer him and his armies together. For the Lamb is exalted above all principalities and powers, whether on earth or in the invisible world. He is *Lord of lords, and King of kings.*
He

He has supreme power over the kingdoms of this world to control and punish them at his pleasure; and they who are engaged in his cause are such as are obedient to his call, chosen and separated to his service as his peculiar people, and firm in their adherence to him against all opposition. Thus the angel mixes consolation for all true christians, while he informs them of the surprising dominion which Antichrist would gain over the nations of the earth.

The angel goes on to give an interpretation of the waters on which the whore sitteth, and says, "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes and nations and tongues." In Daniel's vision of the four monarchies, he saw the four winds of heaven striving on the great sea; which clearly denotes that those monarchies arose out of a multitude of nations in a tumultuous state, suffering all the calamities of war. The first beast described in the 13th chapter, which is Daniel's fourth beast, arose out of the sea, *i. e.* was formed of multitudes of people. And on the same beast, now appearing in the sea, the great whore is mounted. By this we are to understand, that the dominions of the church and city of Rome comprehend the multitudes of people of all nations and languages of which the western empire was composed; that she is above them, is supported by them, and keeps them in subjection to her will.

But great as this idolatrous and persecuting power is, the angel shews us in what manner it shall come to an end. It will continue the appointed time, limited again and again in these visions to twelve hundred and sixty years; but when this time is fulfilled, it will be destroyed by methods of Providence

Providence as extraordinary as those by which at first it was exalted. For the interpreter proceeds, and says, "The ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire : For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." A corrupt church and the civil powers of the world may agree for a long time in a conspiracy against truth and the rights of mankind ; but their different interests may at length interfere, and turn their friendship into the most violent enmity. God, in order to accomplish the wise and righteous designs of his providence, permitted these ten kings or kingdoms at first to agree in acknowledging the claims of the church of Rome, and with one consent to devote themselves to her service, for the accomplishment of the designs of her grandeur. And they will continue their veneration and submission to her authority, until all the events which God has made known in this book, previous to her ruin, are accomplished, and the appointed period arrives. Then the sentiments of these kingdoms will be entirely altered, and they will turn against the whore with perfect hatred, and become her fiercest enemies ; they will desert her cause, and leave her alone, in a desolate condition, forsaken of all her friends ; they will strip her naked of her gaudy ornaments and the wealth she has amassed, expose her abominable tenets and practices, and render her despicable and odious to the multitude of her former admirers ; they will eat her flesh, *i. e.* destroy her with the sword*, or with avidity fly upon the ecclesiastical

clerical body, as ravens on a carcass, and feast themselves on the fatness of her revenues and treasures; and finally, they will burn her with fire, i. e. bring her to destruction in the most merciless manner, take and burn her capital, or rather destroy all her power as effectually as if they should set fire at once to all her magnificent buildings.

Lastly, the angel gives most satisfactory information who this woman is, who has such an abominable character and mysterious name. He has already mentioned one circumstance by which she may be known, viz. that she *sits on seven mountains*, which is a well known classical description of Rome. But it is of the greatest consequence, as being the key to all these visions, that we should be assured beyond all doubt that *Rome* is that great city so frequently mentioned by the name of Babylon; therefore the angel now speaks in as plain and express terms as prophetic language will admit, or the time of the vision allow: For at that time to have named *Rome* in plain terms, under such odious characters, and as a city doomed to destruction, would have exposed St. John, in writing it, to the resentments of an empire which gloried that it was to be eternal. The farther description given is this, "The woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." Who can now doubt what city is intended? What city but Rome, at the time of the vision, could be called emphatically *that great city*, and *that city which reigneth over the kings of the earth*? It is not said, which *shall* reign, but in the present tense, *which reigneth*. This cannot be applied to Constantinople; for though that city was likewise built on seven hills,

hills, and designed by Constantine to be the capital of the empire, it was not built and aggrandised until above two hundred years after this vision. Nothing could have been a greater impropriety than for the angel to acquaint St. John what city is meant in the vision by saying, it is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth, if he referred to a city which then did not exist, and of which St. John could not have any idea. ROME was most certainly, at that time, that great city which was mistress of the world: ROME is the great city mentioned again and again in these visions. ROME is the throne of the beast, the seat of the apostate idolatrous persecuting church, and of Antichrist its head, who exalteth himself above all the powers of the world, over all nations and people which once constituted the western Roman empire.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is the principal key to the prophetic visions which follow upon the opening of the inmost roll of the book in Christ's hand. The profanation of the outer court of the temple and what relates to the witnesses: The rage of the dragon against the woman delivered of the man-child and flying into the wilderness: The blasphemy and fury of the two beasts: The effects of the seven vials; and many particular circumstances in all these visions are made intelligible by these interpretations which the angel gives. Strict attention therefore ought to be given to the contents of this remarkable vision.

It appears that the great whore is that very church which fled into the wilderness when she was borne

up on the two wings of the Roman empire ; that she then became an harlot and profane, having broken the covenant of her God, and polluted herself with idols ; that she has slaughtered the saints till she is even drunk with their blood ; that she has seated herself on the old Roman empire, and manages it at her own will as a seventh head taking place of that which was wounded to death. It also appears that the city and church of Rome, with all the power and dominion annexed, and the bishop of Rome as sovereign of the revived empire, after the old imperial authority ceased, constitute the beast that was, and is not, and yet is, or the first and second beast united in one empire, consisting of civil and ecclesiastical authority blended together ; that this strange mixed power arose into view at the very time when the old empire was broken into a number of independent kingdoms ; and that there was another civil head of that empire after the succession of emperors ceased, which might be reckoned the seventh head ; but that the antichristian power, beginning at that same time, and becoming conspicuous, may with equal propriety be reckoned the seventh ruling power of the Roman empire, or otherwise it may be called the eighth.

From this last circumstance it appears that the papal power began at the time when the Goths exercised kingly authority over Rome and its dominions. They put an end to the old imperial power, continued among the Romans their former laws and privileges, and only claimed the rights of sovereignty over them.

This observation is indeed very different from the opinion of some modern writers of great merit.

They

They fix the beginning of the antichristian empire at the time when Pepin, king of France, took the exarchate of Ravenna from the Lombards, and gave it to the popes, as St. Peter's patrimony, to be under their proper government as worldly sovereigns. This event was A. D. 756, and from that time some late authors choose to begin the computation of 1260 years for the continuance of the papacy. But what historian undertaking to write the history of any particular kingdom from the beginning of it, would begin at the time when it appeared in the perfection of civil form, or had arisen to a very conspicuous height of power. The beginning of a kingdom is when first it becomes distinguishable from others as an object of observation. The power of the bishops of Rome was very great, and the corruptions of the church remarkable, long before they gained the title of universal bishops, or obtained temporal dominions. The opinion that the antichristian power is to be dated from the pope's advancement to temporal dignity is inconsistent with the angel's account of the succession of heads. For whether we reckon the kingdom of the Goths, or the exarchate of Ravenna, the seventh civil head, they were both entirely passed away before the pope became a temporal sovereign, and therefore he cannot be called the seventh with any propriety, but must be the eighth, for he had no existence in their time. Or if we wholly neglect both those governments in order to bring in the papacy as the seventh head of the beast, then it can by no means be made the eighth, and in the succession there will be a long interruption from A. D. 476 to 756, almost 300 years.

As one great design of this book is to warn the church of the coming of Antichrist, the corruptor of christianity, the usurper of Christ's character, the persecutor of the saints, the deceiver and tyrant of the nations, it is very improbable that all the remarkable advances he made toward this power should be wholly past over in the prophecies, and no hint given to look for him before he appeared in the height of magnificence. But since, according to the most easy construction of the 10th and 11th verses of this chapter, we are directed to look for him at the time when a new civil power over Rome should succeed to that of the emperors, and as appearing within that time with so much authority as to stand in competition with that seventh head, and have a good claim to his place in the reckoning in several respects, though in some views he may be called the eighth head; why should not an interpretation so easy, and so agreeable to the angel's words be preferred to an opinion which interrupts the succession of heads, and supposes the beast to be absolutely without any signs of life for near three hundred years, and which is moreover so irreconcilable with Antichrist's being numbered both as the seventh and eighth head?

That the bishops of Rome had arrived at very high honor, wealth, and power, in the time of the gothic kings, is abundantly evident in the history of that age. They had obtained a grant of supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction over all the western churches by the edict of the emperors Gratian and Valentinian, A. D. 379, and they immediately began to exercise it. This jurisdiction was afterward
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more fully established by an edict of Valentinian III. A. D. 445. Of this jurisdiction the illustrious Sir Isaac Newton has produced abundant proof, in his observations on the power of the eleventh horn of Daniel's fourth beast. The same illustrious author also observes, that while this ecclesiastical dominion was rising up, the barbarous nations invaded the western empire, and founded several kingdoms therein; and that these kingdoms by degrees embraced the faith, and submitted to the authority of the bishops of Rome. Sigonius, one of the most diligent and faithful historians of later times, of the church of Rome, finishes his history of the western empire at the end of the kingdom of the Goths. And in the introduction to his history of the kingdom of Italy he says, "The Goths put an end to the fancied eternity of the Roman empire; and while the other provinces of the empire were seized upon and possessed by different nations, they invaded Italy, with peculiar good fortune if they could have kept possession of it longer; and having obliged Momyllus to abdicate the empire, fixed the seat of their kingdom at Ravenna." Momyllus is the same who is commonly called Augustulus; and this historian's reflection, "that the Goths invaded Italy with peculiar good fortune *if they could have kept possession of it longer*," remarkably coincides with the expression of the angel—"And when he cometh he shall continue a short space."—The testimony of the same author, with respect to the power and grandeur of the bishops of Rome in that age, fully proves that Antichrist then began to be conspicuous. He writes of this matter thus*—"As the Roman

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church,

* Sigon. de Reg. Ital. p. 3, 4.

church, founded by the apostle Peter the bishop of the city, and consecrated by the holy blood of the apostle Paul, gained the primacy of all the churches, so it had greater wealth and revenues ; which were chiefly legacies left by christian princes in their zeal for religion, from the time of Constantine. For it was in possession of costly donations of all kinds, made of silver and gold ; and also of fields and manors, which were dispersed through almost all the provinces of Europe and Africa, and called the patrimony of the church of Rome, or the holy apostles. In Italy was the patrimony of the Cottian Alps, of Tuscany, the Sabine, of Bruttia and Lucania, of Calabria and Sicily : And they were governed by a prefect called the rector of the patrimony, sent thither by the pope. From the annual revenue of these lands he not only repaired the ancient churches of the city, and adorned them with new splendor, but also purchased corn for the public supply, and laid it up in granaries for the support of the poor. But the Romans, once the conquerors and lords of the world, had lost as much of their ancient dignity as they had gained of liberty. However, as they were much weakened with respect to wealth after the city had been so often taken and plundered by the barbarous nations, so their spirits were more broken and their ambition humbled. Yet, under so great misfortunes, they maintained the ancient splendor of their name merely by the seat of the pope, who had an extensive command over all the churches. For as the city was visited, not only by the bordering nations, but by those who were at a great distance, either on account of religion, or for the sake of traffic, it seemed as if the
ancient

ancient empire had lost nothing at all of its former glory." By the abovementioned particulars it appears, that under the kingdom of the Goths, which was the last form of the civil empire of Rome, the church of Rome was mistress of all the western churches and the ancient honors of that empire were continued merely by the wealth, dignity, and authority of the bishops of that metropolis. Therefore while the kings of the Goths reigned, this ecclesiastical head was become very conspicuous : And that the church was then profaned by the world, and greatly corrupted with abundance of errors and superstitions, will not be denied by any man acquainted with ecclesiastical history.

All circumstances surprisngly concur to point out the kings of the Goths as the seventh and last governing power of the Roman empire in a civil view, though it then appeared in a dying state ; and afford good evidence that the ecclesiastical power began to rise up as the chief support and glory of Rome, and to exercise its authority in a very distinguishable manner, so as even to vie with the civil power, while that kingdom continued. Therefore the date of the antichristian power of Rome must begin while the gothic kings reigned ; that it may admit of a doubt which may be called the seventh head ; and that if Antichrist must be reckoned after those kings as the eighth, he may nevertheless be brought in among the seven as a cotemporary.

The government of the Goths continued about sixty or seventy years : Therefore we are still left at uncertainty from what particular time of their kingdom to begin to reckon the period of twelve hundred and sixty years, which is mentioned no

less than five times in these visions, as the limited duration of Antichrist's empire. As Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah's appearing was fulfilled with great exactness, but admitted of different methods of reckoning ; so we have reason to think the repeated mention of twelve hundred and sixty days, *i. e.* years, as the duration of Antichrist's reign, is intended to fix the time with so great a degree of precision, that the accomplishment may afford undeniable evidence that Christ has given us this prophecy. If, after the event, we are left at so great uncertainty as to vary some hundreds of years in dating the beginning of the period, How can it be proved that the prophecy has been fulfilled at the very time assigned ? And, How can we bring this as a confirmation of the truth of christianity ?

Now therefore that we may come nearer to the precise time from whence to begin the date of Antichrist's power, it must be well considered, that this head belongs to the western empire and church as distinguished from the eastern. Rome is the metropolis of this power ; not Constantinople. This power is characterised as idolatrous and a furious persecutor of the saints, neither of which characters distinguish the Greek church however apostatized. From this consideration it follows, that there would be great impropriety in dating the rise of the antichristian power before the western church became distinguishable from the eastern. A separation of the church of Rome from the eastern did not take place so as to render them distinguishable until about the year 500, at which time there was an open rupture between the bishops of Rome and the eastern churches on account of inserting the

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the name of Acacius, in the dyptychs, or ecclesiastical registers, among the bishops of Constantinople. This quarrel continued above twenty years; the bishop of Rome issued orders to the eastern churches in an high tone; and from that time the churches of the western empire appeared as a distinct party from those in the east, and sided with their bishop in his continual attempts to bring all the churches in the world under his authority. In confirmation of this distinct appearance of the western church in that century, Du Pin in the conclusion of his history of the church in the sixth century says, "The churches of the east and west began to be no longer united." The same observation is made upon the beginning of that century by other ecclesiastical historians. It must also be considered, that to date the beginning of the antichristian power after the end of the kingdom of the Goths, would plainly be too late; because then Antichrist could not with the least propriety be numbered among the seven heads, but must be called indisputably the eighth, contrary to what the angel says. Therefore sometime between A. D. 500, and the end of the reign of the Goths, which was A. D. 553, when Narfes took Rome and their dominions in Italy from them, and began the exarchate of Ravenna, the reckoning of twelve hundred and sixty years must begin. But Antichrist cannot be supposed to start up into view at once, in a sudden manner, as he will not fall without many preparatory circumstances. He became by degrees distinguishable, and doubtless his ruin will be brought on by several steps in Providence. Therefore if we begin at the earliest date, when we may suppose he first presented himself to view, the end of the period

period will bring us to the first steps toward his fall; but if we begin at the latest time, twelve hundred and sixty years will bring us to the complete ruin of his power.

The first open breach between the western and eastern churches was, as we have said, about the year 500. To reckon twelve hundred and sixty years from that time brings us to A. D. 1760*. And it is remarkable, that from that very year, when the Jesuits had excited the resentments of the kings of Europe which finally brought on the dissolution of that order, the power of the church of Rome has been very apparently declining, and several plain steps have been taken by the providence of God toward her utter destruction. Convents have been suppressed and their revenues seized in kingdoms where superstition had long reigned without control. The infernal courts of inquisition have received severe checks, by which they are likely to be soon annihilated, in countries most noted for Rom-
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* Lest any should suppose the foregoing interpretation and manner of computation was suggested by present appearances in the world, the author thinks it necessary to declare, that he was led into it by strict attention to the words of the prophecy so long ago as A. D. 1742. From that time he has repeatedly declared his opinion to his friends in the ministry, and others, that nothing remarkable in divine Providence, directly tending to bring on the destruction of the antichristian empire, might be expected until about the year 1760: That as the religion of Rome has been intimately blended with the civil polity of the European nations, great revolutions must take place among them in order to free them from ecclesiastical tyranny: And that as these things will be effected in the ordinary methods of Providence, it may be supposed they will gradually proceed towards the full accomplishment through a series of fifty or sixty years.

ish bigotry. Liberty of conscience has been given to protestants in nations which had been long devoted to the papacy. Roman catholic princes begin to withhold from Rome the customary revenues. Even a late pope, by his liberal writings, has lent his help to render Romish superstition ridiculous. And appearances are still proceeding. The world is roused to a sense of civil and religious liberty by the spirit of America, and the wonderful interpositions of heaven in our favour. France is searching the foundations of despotism, and establishing on its ruins the freedom of a great nation; and God has given them a king * to be the restorer of liberty, and raised up a second WASHINGTON † to command their national troops. May we not therefore look for events more and more remarkable, until all the nations of Europe shake off that yoke of ecclesiastical tyranny to which they have so long submitted, and assert the rights of nations and of conscience? If the foregoing observations are just, may we not expect that the great designs of Providence will in a short time be accomplished, in the total destruction of that empire which the devil has maintained visibly in the world for so many ages in different forms, and in the universal diffusion of the light and liberty of the gospel among the nations which have been held in ignorance and abject servitude?

SCENE

* Louis XVI.

† The Marquis de la Fayette, who served with high reputation, as a volunteer in the American war, under the renowned General Washington.

SCENE IV.—CHAP. XVIII.

The Overthrow of Babylon, and the pathetic Lamentation at her Fall.

THE 16th chapter concludes with the wonderful effects of the seventh vial upon the metropolis of Antichrist, and his whole empire. The great city is there said to be divided into three parts by a mighty earthquake, or to be split asunder, so that no part escaped the violent effects of the shock. And the entire overthrow of it is intimated in these words, "and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath;" and is represented "by the removal of the islands and mountains, and hailstones sent down from heaven of a miraculous size." The 17th chapter is an interruption of the view of the overthrow of the city, that the mystery of the city and empire might be explained. But now the prophecy returns from that digression to give a more particular picture of Babylon's sinking, and wholly swallowed up. And it now appears that the earthquake beforementioned not only split the city into three parts, but sunk it, so that it was found no more; and here all the nations lament her destruction.

This new scene is introduced with great solemnity, by an angel descending from heaven with great power, and clothed with radiance which enlightened the whole earth. This angel "cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." The same proclamation is made
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in the 8th verse of the 14th chapter, which undoubtedly refers to this same event. Here the angel adds, "And is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." This has reference to Isaiah's prophecy of the fall of ancient Babylon, in which he uses the same figures—"And Babylon, the glory of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; it shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their folds there; but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there; and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces*." In this passage of Isaiah, what he calls *satyrs* is translated in the Septuagint *Demons*, and therefore the angel here, agreeably to the Septuagint, represents antichristian Babylon as become the habitation of *Demons*, or as it is in our translation *Devils*. The proclamation is a strong figurative description of the utter desolation of Rome, perhaps not as a city but a metropolitan church; and the general signification of the figures is, That as the very place where ancient Babylon stood is no more to be found, or is become a doleful fen, the haunt of all kinds of odious birds and beasts, so this mystical Babylon, the church which is seated at Rome, will be so entirely destroyed that no remains of her former grandeur shall be found, but it shall be utterly forsaken and detested

* Isa. xiii. 19—22.

detested by men as the residence of demons and all kinds of evil spirits.

The angel proceeds to declare the reason of this judgment, so awful, so astonishing, accompanied with such evident tokens of the vengeance of heaven : The reason is the same which is given in the 8th verse of the 14th chapter, " Because all nations have drunk of the wine of *her raging fornication*, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." The nations have been fascinated with her idolatries and gaudy pomp ; the kings have consented to her enticements and joined to uphold her wickedness ; and all her clergy, who make merchandize of the souls of men, have made greater gain by her spiritual traffic than is made by merchants in worldly commerce, and have supported themselves in the greatest delicacies.

After this another voice comes from heaven, saying, " Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, righteous Lot and his family were hastened by the angel to escape for their lives, lest they should be consumed with the wicked inhabitants of those cities. And when Korah and his rebellious company were to be swallowed up in the opening of the earth, the congregation of Israel was commanded to depart from the tents of those wicked men, lest they should perish with them. In the same manner Jeremiah calls upon the people of God to flee out of ancient Babylon,

Babylon, as a city doomed to destruction, “ * Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul ; be not cut off in her iniquity : For this is the time of the Lord’s vengeance ; he will render unto her a recompense.—My people, go out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord.” To these scriptures the voice from heaven has reference. And it may be observed here, that even in the midst of antichristian Rome some of God’s sealed people yet remain, who, though they abhor her corruptions, may be loth wholly to renounce her, or quit the temporal advantages and conveniencies which they enjoy in her territories. But if this solemn call reaches their ears, it will be at their extreme peril if they refuse to quit her and make *their* escape ; and their danger is so much greater as the time draws near for her utter destruction.

But the call is to do more than this ; to join against her, and assist in casting down from her seat that apostate church, and destroying her. For the voice says, “ Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works ; in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her. For she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine ; and she shall be utterly burned with fire. For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.” The people of God are here required to take an active part in the destruction of an abominable church,

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* Jer. li. 6. 45.

or at least to join in full approbation of the judgments which God executes upon the great harlot ; for he is determined to repay her double, and even fourfold, for her cruel persecutions of the saints, according to the utmost rigor of the old law of retaliation, and to fill to her a cup of affliction double to that which she had filled to them. In this there seems to be some allusion to those words in the hundred and thirty seventh Psalm, " O daughter of Babylon who art to be destroyed ; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us : Happy shall he be, that dasheth thy little ones against the stones." The punishment of Rome is to be in full proportion to all her former glory and delicacy. Though she has flattered herself that she was exalted above all danger, and should never experience any humbling affliction, yet all manner of dreadful calamities will come upon her, suddenly, and as it were in one day, all at once ; and she will be, like a notorious criminal, burned with fire. For however she may now seem to bid defiance to danger, God is able to bring on her the most sudden and dreadful judgments, at his pleasure. She may expect all the miseries which the grandest city must suffer, when besieged by a powerful army, and violently stormed and plundered ; famine and pestilence raging at the same time, and heaven and earth engaged against her. That church which has reigned so long over the nations of Europe, and with so much magnificence, to whom all the kings have paid homage, will be cast down from the height of her glory, deprived of her wealth and delicacies, and reduced to extreme sorrow, contempt, and desolation : And all this will be sudden and unexpected ;
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for she will take no notice of any previous warnings.

Upon this follows an epicedium, or funeral lamentation upon the overthrow and utter destruction of the great city or church of Rome. It is an imitation of that pathetic lamentation over the famous city of Tyre which we have in the 27th chapter of Ezekiel. As the spiritual traffic of Rome bears some resemblance to the gainful trade of that ancient mart of the world ; so the fall of antichristian Rome will fill the world with consternation, and the anguish of sorrow, as the nations mourned when the trade of Tyre was ruined, her wealth plundered, her ports demolished, her glorious towers overthrown, and the city buried in heaps of desolation.

The kings of the earth who had before committed fornication with this mother of harlots, *i. e.* complied with her idolatrous religion, supported her dignity, and shared the advantages of her tyrannical power and spiritual merchandise, are represented as gathered together, gazing with astonishment at her destruction. " Standing afar off for the fear of her torment" they cry, " Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city ! for in one hour is thy judgment come." Even those kings who, from being her most devoted servants, will turn against her, and hate her, and be instrumental of kindling the flames to burn her, will nevertheless feel some tenderness of sorrow when they see so brilliant an harlot burnt with fire, and all her magnificence and opulence destroyed.

The merchants of the earth are also represented as weeping and mourning over her, because they have no longer the advantage of her gainful mer-

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chandise. And to heighten the description of their sorrow, the various articles of her merchandise are enumerated : Every thing which is rich ; all kinds of useful and costly metals ; all manner of precious stones ; manufactures of every kind ; all the spices of Arabia ; all the produce of the field ; cattle both great and small ; horses and chariots ; and among the rest, slaves and souls of men. By her arts the church of Rome has drawn to her the wealth of the world of every kind, and it has been a gainful merchandise to those whom she has employed as her agents.

This enumeration adds the greater pomp to this lamentation, and is designed in general to intimate, that the mysterious trade of Rome, by which she has amassed such amazing wealth, consists of a multitude of branches, which can scarcely be numbered or thought of : Such as masses, relics, pretended miracles, bulls, indulgencies, pious donations, investitures, &c. It would be a fanciful labor to endeavor to apply every enumerated article of her commerce, to her particular kinds and methods of gain. Yet one article mentioned deserves some special notice, viz. "*Slaves and souls of men.*" It is said of Tyre, in the 27th of Ezekiel, "Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, were thy merchants, they traded the *persons of men* : " This in the Hebrew text is the souls of men, and so the septuagint translates it. But in this funeral lamentation it is much strengthened, by the mention of the *bodies* as well as the souls of men : For instead of *slaves* the Greek word ought to be translated *bodies*, which is its literal signification. But it is not a common slave trade which is carried on by Rome. This indeed, in the view

view of every man who knows the rights of mankind, and regards that great law of God, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," must appear unlawful and detestable. But the church of Rome makes a trade of the bodies of men, as her high authority keeps multitudes miserably poor, while they wear out their bodies to satisfy her continual demands, and contribute to her luxury. She has promoted that despotism which has enslaved the nations, and reaped great advantage from it. She has also imposed on the bodies of men mortifications and severe penances, and often gained by commuting them for money. She has made a good trade of the bodies or bones of saints, which have enriched many of her particular churches. And as to the souls of men this is a most gainful branch of her merchandise, for both living and dead she makes them depend upon her, and always finds men willing to purchase salvation for themselves and their friends at a good price.

Moreover, all that were any ways dependent on this great city, or church, or concerned in her traffic, how small soever their part of the gains; "all the captains of ships, the passengers, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea," are represented as joining in the universal lamentation, and "crying, when they see the smoke of her burning, what city is like unto this great city!" They proceed in the extremity of grief, cast dust on their heads, weep and wail, and cry, "Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea, by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate." Thus the innumerable monks and friars, even down to the meanest mendicants,

who gain their living by the church of Rome, will bitterly weep over her when she falls.

But on the other hand, the true church of Christ, saints in heaven, and saints on earth, are called upon to rejoice at her destruction. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." It will be a joyful day to all the faithful servants of Christ, who take their religion wholly from him and his apostles, when they behold the period at length arrived for the execution of judgment upon that apostate church which has been their greatest enemy; and when they behold the metropolis of that power, which has slaughtered so great a multitude of saints, overthrown by the signal vengeance of God. To this the prophetic words of David are applicable,—“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.”

After this the angel declares this destruction of antichristian Rome to be final, by taking up a stone like a great millstone, and casting it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.” And then he adds a most beautiful poetic amplification of the last words, as the conclusion of the song of lamentation which will be sung in mournful notes at her fall.

Mirth and pleasure once reigned through the streets of this magnificent city; all manner of music was heard there; the height of joy and festivity was seen among the inhabitants; but “the voice of harpers

harpers and musicians, and of pipers and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee."—Once all kinds of occupations were carried on with great industry and vigor ; but all are at an end, " No craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee."—The millstones were continually grinding to furnish the numerous inhabitants with bread. But " the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee."—How beautifully illuminated did the great city appear at a distance in the evening, when candles shined in every house and window ! But " the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee."—The celebration of marriage was continual in the prosperity of this city ; the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride were heard, with shouts of mirth from their companions. But " the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee."—All manner of entertainments, all kinds of grandeur, gaiety, and joy, once were to be seen and heard ; for her " merchants were the great men of the earth," and by her " sorceries were all nations deceived." Kings, princes, and nobles, were the instruments of procuring her wealth and grandeur, and all nations by her bewitching arts were deluded into servile dependence upon her. But now her day is over : Her glory is gone.

If any ask, Why is the judgment so severe ? If such a city or church must be demolished, Why is her destruction accompanied with such terrible circumstances ? And why is she irrecoverable from her ruins ? The angel gives a satisfactory answer. " In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." Her crimes were unparalleled, the most heinous and

aggravated that can any where else be found. She has gone far beyond all the cruel murderers of the saints which have been since the beginning of the world. She has murdered thousands and hundreds of thousands, even beyond numeration, because they adhered to the doctrines of the prophets and apostles, walked according to God's commands, and would not receive the traditions and obey the precepts of men, bow down to her idols, or receive her mark. Therefore, like Jerusalem, the guilt of all the righteous blood which has been shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel to the blood of the very last witness for Jesus, is concentrated in her, and cries to heaven for vengeance. What punishment can be too severe and terrible for a city or church chargeable with such high unexampled crimes?

SCENE V.—CHAP. XIX.

The Triumph of the Saints at the Fall of Babylon. A general View of the approaching happy State of the Church, as the Marriage of the Lamb. And Christ and his Armies going out to the last Battle, and gaining a decisive Victory over the Beast and false Prophet.

AFTER such an amazing view of the destruction of antichristian Rome, and agreeably to the call given in the preceding chapter to the heavens, and all the holy apostles and prophets, to rejoice over her; St. John, in this vision, hears a great voice of a multitude of people in heaven in full chorus, rejoicing and praising God, and ascribing

ing to him all glory and honour, because he had judged the great whore which corrupted the earth with her fornications, and had avenged the blood of his servants at her hands : And their Alleluias were repeated, when they saw her smoke rising up perpetually, as from everlasting burnings.

This represents the united and elevated worship of all the saints in heaven and earth, who with one mind and voice praise God continually for all the glories of his nature, and the wonderful works of mercy and salvation for his people, while he executes the most tremendous judgments upon the enemies of the gospel. The destruction of antichristian Rome is the happy deliverance of the true church of Christ from oppression, corruptions, and persecutions. It is the vindication of truth and righteousness ; and an introduction to the prevalence of the kingdom of Christ through the world. The souls of them that were slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held, under the heathen emperors, are represented as crying under the altar with a loud voice, “ How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ? ” And they are answered, that they must “ rest yet for a little season until their fellow servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” Their blood was partly avenged when the Pagan religion of the empire was overthrown ; and then again when Rome was repeatedly taken and sacked by the barbarians, and the civil empire brought to its end by the Goths. But now the time is arrived for full vengeance to be taken on Rome in the antichristian form : For the slaughter of the saints hath been completed by her ; she hath filled

up the measure of her sins, and wrath is come upon her to the utmost. Now therefore the cries of all the martyrs are fully answered, and their blood avenged with just severity. Therefore heaven resounds with alleluias to the Lord God, as the author of salvation to his people, and righteous in judging their enemies.

After these alleluias of the multitude of saints and martyrs, the four and twenty elders round the throne, representing the whole church of God, and the four cherubim, representing the angels, join in concert, and fall down and worship God that sitteth on the throne, saying, "Amen, alleluia." They express most humble reverence of the supreme Majesty, by their prostration; and rejoice with the church in all God's works of wisdom and power, mercy and judgment.

That all the servants of God on earth may unite with the heavenly choirs on this joyful occasion, a voice proceeding from the throne commands all the servants of God to glorify him, "Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him both small and great." The special reason of this universal command to praise God, immediately follows: For at once there was a loud and universal burst of alleluias like "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." The connection of this anthem with the general triumph at the fall of antichristian Rome intimates, that the prevalence of Christ's kingdom
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on earth will be introduced in succession to that great event. The affection which Christ bears to his church, and the peculiar tokens of his kindness are spoken of by the prophets of the Old Testament under the metaphor of a marriage contract. Hosea says in God's name, “ * I will betroth thee unto me forever ; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness ; and thou shalt know the Lord.” So likewise God speaks by Isaiah, “ † For as a young man marryeth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee ; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” In the New Testament also the same figures are used. John the baptist speaks of Christ as the bridegroom of the church, and of himself as one of his friends ‡. Jesus Christ represents the first propagation of the gospel by the parable of the marriage of the king's son ; and the reception of his church into heaven at the last day, by that of the ten virgins. And this language is familiarly used in St. Paul's epistles : “ * I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” Writing to the Ephesians he says, “ § Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Therefore as marriages were usually celebrated with great joy and festivity ; when Christ

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* Hof. ii. 19, 20.

† Isa. lxii. 5.

‡ John iii. 29.

* 2 Cor. xi. 2.

§ Eph. v. 25—32.

remarkably honors his church, and by his peculiar favor renders it conspicuous and prosperous in the world, this may be called the marriage of the Lamb; and the figure is especially used to signify that last happy state of the church, when Christ will reign over all nations by the universal prevalence of the gospel. To this great event, this glorious anthem in the vision refers: Which is plain from the reason given for these shouts of praise, "For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. For the marriage of the Lamb is come." This joyful event is the same which is mentioned in the 15th verse of the 11th chapter, as the effect of the seventh trumpet, when there were great voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." This is there celebrated in the song of the elders, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." This happy state of the church, consequent upon the overthrow of antichristian Rome, will bear some resemblance to the consummation of the church's felicity at the last day, which will be in the most complete sense the marriage day of the Lamb; when he will receive his church to himself, to live and reign with him forever in heaven.

The preparation of the church for her state of prosperity on earth, under Jesus Christ her head, is next described. "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white: For the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." Righteousness is that pure and white raiment with which Christ's people are clothed. It is granted to them,

them, as the effect of God's unmerited mercy and good will in Jesus Christ ; who of God is made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that he that glorieth may glory only in the Lord. Christ's people are an holy nation, who are purified from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and practise righteousness according to the divine commands, endeavoring in their temper and whole conversation to please their God and glorious Savior. This is the wedding garment, in which the church appears well pleasing in the sight of Christ.

That all may be prepared for the blessings which Christ will confer on his church, the angel commands St. John to write this important sentence, " Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb : " And then adds, " These are the true sayings of God. " The meaning of this is plain. Blessed are they who shall be found worthy to be admitted among the members of Christ's faithful church in that day of joy, when it shall be publicly acknowledged and honored in the world : But especially in that last and great day, when the nuptials shall be completed by the reception of the church into everlasting mansions of glory : For they who are rejected from among Christ's people, will have their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, and be doomed at the great day to everlasting destruction. Of the truth of this revelation of the prosperous state of the church after the total destruction of the fourth monarchy which has been continued in the antichristian empire, we have assurance by the prophecies of Daniel, which plainly speak of the kingdom of God as universal through
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the earth when the fourth beast is destroyed ; and by repeated declarations from Christ in this revelation.

When the angel which appeared had shewed St. John all these things, John prostrated himself at his feet to worship him, as one who seemed to have a divine character. But the angel prohibited this worship, saying, " See thou do it not : I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God : For the testimony of Jesus in the spirit of prophecy." By this we see that this angel was not Christ himself, but a messenger sent from him ; one of his servants as St. John was, and in this respect on a par with him and all his brethren employed to publish the testimony of Jesus Christ, however otherwise distinguished. This is a plain declaration that religious worship is due only to God ; and it is directly pointed against that idolatry which is the most notorious corruption of the church under the reign of Antichrist, viz. the worship of angels, and demons or departed saints : This has made way for all other corruptions of religion, and on this account more especially she is called the mother of harlots. The angel calls himself the fellow servant of John, and of his brethren who are witnesses to the word of Christ, because he himself was sent to give testimony to this revelation as given by Christ. " For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy : " The spirit and peculiar design of prophecy is to testify concerning Jesus : The spirit which spake in all the prophets from the beginning spake of him, and declared nothing but what he commanded : An angel can do no more, and therefore in this respect is

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on a level with those whom Jesus has employed among men for this same purpose.

After this general intimation given that the kingdom of Christ is at hand, St. John saw a wonderful representation of the final victory over the beast and the false prophet, preparatory to the universal reign of Christ ; which perhaps may be designed as a more particular view of the manner in which the destruction of the great city, before generally declared, will be effected ; or it may shew, that when the metropolis of Antichrist is overthrown, there will be the most extraordinary exertions of all his remaining force to restore him to his seat, and maintain his empire.

“ Heaven was opened, and a white horse came forth, with a glorious person seated upon him ; who, as he passed along, was proclaimed by this character, *Faithful and true* ; and it was declared, that he judgeth and makes war in righteousness. His eyes had a piercing brightness like a flame of fire. He was adorned with most extraordinary majesty, as a king in whom the dignity and power of many kingdoms were united : For on his head appeared, not merely a single crown, but, many crowns. And he had a name written which no man knew but he himself ; for his character was too high to be fully known by men. His clothing also was very remarkable ; for his vesture appeared as if dipt in blood. And the name by which he was distinguished was, **THE WORD OF GOD**. He was followed by the armies of heaven, all mounted in the same manner upon white horses, and clothed in robes of fine linen white and clean, signifying the dignity and sanctity of their characters as kings and priests unto God

God and the Lamb. Instead of other armor, a sharp sword proceeded out of his mouth, that with it he should smite the nations ; and he had power to rule them with a rod of iron, a strong sceptre which could not be broken. And to him was committed the execution of the just vengeance of God against his enemies, that he might tread them down in his anger, as grapes are trodden in a winepress. Moreover there was on his vesture, on the part which covers the thigh, a name or title in capitals, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**"

Now after this description, who can doubt that the Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious person intended ? His personal appearance and equipage, his names and titles, his commission and attendants, all circumstances plainly shew that no other can be meant. Though there is some difference in this description from those which have been given before in this book, yet several particulars prove him to be the same person who appeared to St. John in the first vision, and who was seen again at the opening of the first seal. In the first vision he appears in the most divine lustre, having eyes as a flame of fire, and a sharp two edged sword proceeding out of his mouth. At the opening of the sixth seal, he appears, as in this vision, riding on a white horse, with a bow in his hand : A crown was given him ; and he went forth conquering and to conquer. He then began his conquests among the nations by the gospel, and was pursuing his victories. But as the course of his victories were a long time interrupted by the antichristian powers, and his cause at length required some extraordinary manifestations of his irresistible might, we now behold him preparing to complete

complete the design of his expedition, by giving a decisive blow to his greatest enemies. He is at the head of a great army of saints, clothed with glory and majesty, going on to certain victory.

His horse is white, to denote both his majesty and the righteousness of his cause, and that his word makes swift progress. He is called "Faithful and True," because his Father has entrusted him with the affairs of his kingdom, and he has always been faithful in his administration, and punctual in performing his word to his people. When he judges, his judgments are perfectly just. When he makes war, it is in the cause of truth and righteousness. His eyes, like a flame of fire, dart terror into the hearts of his enemies, penetrate their most secret designs, and behold the works and inmost thoughts of all men. He has many crowns on his head, being King of kings, and Lord of lords; for he is at the head of the kingdom of nature, of providence, and grace, and all nations of the earth must finally submit to his government. He is said to have a name written which no man knoweth but he himself, because he is called, in the sacred scriptures, the Son of God, the brightness of the glory of God, and the express image of his person, and one with the Father, and is described in the 9th chapter of Isaiah by the most divine and wonderful characters. He is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, to signify the glorious victory obtained by his cross over the powers of darkness, and his victories by the gospel over all enemies, especially that last decisive triumph over the beast and false prophet which he was soon to gain by that battle to which he is going; and this appearance is illustrated by

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Isaiah's description of this same person in his 63d chapter. The sharp sword proceeding out of his mouth is his word published in the gospel, by which he subdues and rules the nations : And therefore his name is most emphatically called the **WORD OF GOD** ; the same who is called by that name by St. John in the beginning of his gospel, by whom all things were created, and by whom God has revealed his will to men. The armies of heaven follow this wonderful general upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean, to denote that all the saints are earnestly engaged in the cause of of Christ, and join to promote the success of the gospel : They fight his battles, and triumph in his victories.

As soon as St. John had viewed this glorious person and the army which followed him, he observed another surprising appearance. He "saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come, and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God ; that ye may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." This alludes to Ezekiel's representation of the slaughter which should be made of the vast army of Gog and Magog, or some amazing destruction of the enemies of the church, in the latter days. He makes use of the same figures in a proclamation to every feathered fowl and to every beast of the field*. Such a proclamation paints in the strongest colors the greatest carnage

* Ezek. xxxix. 17.

carnage conceivable. The station of this angel in the sun, may perhaps be an intimation, that he is a minister of God appointed to superintend the political system, while all the nations are filled with tumults and insurrections by the emissaries and partizans of Antichrist, raising armies for the support of his power. For since the church of Rome has so intimately mixed herself with the civil polity of the nations under her empire, it may reasonably be supposed that when the ten kings, or ruling powers of Europe, shall turn against her and join to destroy her, a surprising change in their civil polity will take place, and armies of their own subjects will rise to restore the old constitution, headed by powerful zealots on the side of Antichrist. But the providence of God will preserve the order of the civil powers, and save them from utter confusion and dissolution.

As soon as this proclamation was made, "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies," presented themselves to view; "gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." The battle seemed to be fought, and immediately decided. Christ and his army was victorious: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." This exhibits the final destruction of Antichrist and his empire. The beast here mentioned as taken, and distinguished from the false prophet, is evidently the first beast, seen in the 13th chapter, in his new revived state,

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after the second beast was united with it : Or the Roman empire continued by the artifice of Antichrist, under his own management, keeping all nations in subjection as under the former civil empire. It is that beast before which the other, here called the false prophet, wrought miracles. The proper authority of the first beast, revived, is civil ; that of the latter, ecclesiastical : Both blended together make up the beast now mentioned as taken, signifying an empire formed by the junction of civil and ecclesiastical power, under an ecclesiastical head, Rome remaining the metropolis. The false prophet is here described in the very same manner as the second beast in that chapter, viz. by his working miracles before the first, and deceiving men by this means, so as to persuade them to worship the image of the first, and receive his mark. Therefore by the false prophet is meant the ecclesiastical head, or ruling power of the revived and mixed empire ; who acts as having a divine mission, and pretends to prove it, and keeps men in awe of his authority, by lying wonders and awful denunciations of divine wrath. This can be no other than the bishop of Rome, who claims the supremacy. He and his whole empire with all his forces, fall before Christ and his armies : And they are consigned to eternal perdition.

The beast and the false prophet are said to be cast alive into " a lake of fire burning with brimstone." To be cast into fire, enraged with burning brimstone, is a figurative description of the most dreadful punishment to be inflicted on the wicked by divine justice. David expresses the destruction of the wicked in the same language, in the 11th Psalm.

Isaiah

Isaiah speaks of God's enemies as cast into the fire of Tophet, kindled by the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone*. St. Jude says of Sodom and Gomorrah, on whom the Lord rained brimstone and fire out of heaven, that they are set forth as examples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; *i. e.* the fire utterly consumed them; from these burnings they were never recovered; and by them the punishments of a future world are represented. Our Lord Jesus also repeatedly expresseth the future punishment of the wicked by their being cast into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. But it would be a great absurdity to suppose the beast and the false prophet, as meaning not persons but the antichristian empire and its successive heads or ruling powers, will be cast literally into a lake of fire; for a body politic or ecclesiastical is not a subject of personal punishment. Therefore the idea communicated is in general, that Antichrist and his kingdom, the whole ecclesiastical power and polity, shall be utterly destroyed by the most awful judgments of heaven, beyond all possibility of recovery. Yet this farther idea may be intended, that all such individual persons as join in supporting the false prophet and his empire, and have received the mark of the beast, unless they are reclaimed by the gospel, will be punished in another world, in that state of misery of which the testimonies of God's righteous vengeance in this life are signal warnings.

The vision proceeds to represent the remnant of the army of the beast as "slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceed-

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* Isa. xxx. 33.

ed out of his mouth : And all the fowls were filled with their flesh." The whole army of the antichristian powers was either metaphorically slain, by being conquered and brought into subjection to Christ by the power of his word, which is the sword of his mouth ; or else literally slain in a real battle, which will be fought in the antichristian cause, according to the threatenings of divine wrath. For though the whole of this representation may be taken metaphorically, for the prevalence of the truth of the gospel against all error, superstition, and tyranny ; yet it seems most probable, that the antichristian powers will not tamely suffer that long established empire to fall ; but will endeavour to defend it by the utmost force of arms, and be at last subdued with terrible slaughter.

PROPHECY THE FIFTH.

CHAPTERS XX—XXII.

Satan bound for a Thousand Years; during which Time the Saints reign with Christ on Earth. The Corruption of the World after that Period. The general Judgment. And the complete Felicity of the heavenly World.

SCENE I.—CHAP. XX. 1—10.

A View of the universal Prevalence of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, which is to continue a Thousand Years. A vast Army of Enemies at the End of this Period, who are to be destroyed by the Arrival of the great Day of Judgment.

A REPRESENTATION is now given of things which are to follow after the final destruction of the beast and false prophet. An angel came "down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled: And after that he must be loosed a little season."

In the 9th chapter an angel comes down from heaven, who has the key of the bottomless pit given him to open it; and out of it locusts then came, led on by the devil. In the 12th chapter the devil is represented by a great red dragon, which had great authority in the world, and claimed the Roman empire as the seat of his visible dominion, which he

made use of as his instrument to persecute the church and propagate idolatry. Though he was under some restraint for a time, when the pagan religion of the empire was overthrown, yet he soon resumed his power in another form, by placing Antichrist on his throne, and deluding all nations into a new kind of idolatry. He inspired Mahomet as a false prophet to deceive the world, and sent armies of Saracens to root out christianity and fill the world with the darkness of a new invented religion. His great power in the world has always been exercised in the most remarkable manner by his management of the great empires and kingdoms of the world, so that they have established superstition, falsehood, and idolatry, and have used all their civil power to oppose that religion which God has revealed.

Now in this vision the devil is represented as deprived of this great power, and laid under a long and effectual restraint: He is bound with a great chain, cast into the bottomless pit, locked up there, and farther secured with a seal, for a thousand years, that he may *deceive the nations* no more until the end of that period. The vision affords no grounds for the opinion, that Satan will be so confined as to have no kind of power over any individuals of mankind; that every man will be free from all his temptations, and no more be in danger of seduction into error and wickedness. The vision is hieroglyphical, and the meaning is not to be forced beyond the general design. The real intention is clearly intimated by the expression, "that he should *deceive the nations* no more till the thousand years should be finished." He will not have power to deceive whole

whole nations, and support false religion among them by holding the civil powers under his influence and direction, and employing the force of laws and arms against the truth ; but the world will be freed from this exercise of his tyranny. Yet the vision may justify the supposition, that his power over individuals will also be greatly restrained, inasmuch as he will lose the advantage of public prejudice and the combination of the kings of the earth against true religion : And so the gospel will have free course, and prevail in the most remarkable manner, even beyond the effects of it in apostolic times. This is suggested by what follows.

“ A number of thrones appear, with persons seated on them, and judgment was given them ;” they were like a session of many judges, or magistrates, who have authority to join with the sovereign in managing the affairs of a large kingdom. There is also an appearance of the “ souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, nor his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands ; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” All that had suffered martyrdom, by various kinds of deaths, from the beginning of christianity, under the heathen emperors, and through the whole reign of Antichrist, for their stedfast adherence to the faith of Christ and the word of God, and had refused to comply in the least degree with any of the corruptions of the church, seemed as if they were alive again, and advanced to great honor and felicity in Christ’s kingdom on earth, now become universal, and to continue a thousand years.

That this apparent revival of the martyrs may not be taken for a literal resurrection, it is immediately added, " But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." They who had not suffered martyrdom in the cause of Christ remained still among the dead, which were not to be raised until the end of the thousand years, *i. e.* until the general resurrection; and therefore this resurrection of the martyrs is called, " the first resurrection;" and it is designedly distinguished from that real resurrection of the dead at the end of the world, which is one of the plain doctrines of the gospel, and particularly represented in the latter part of this chapter. It would make a strange confusion of ideas if we should suppose a real resurrection of all the martyrs, and no others, to be intended in this vision. If they only are to constitute the kingdom of Christ on earth, How can his kingdom be considered as becoming universal over all nations of mankind, as is repeatedly and plainly foretold in Daniel's prophecies, and in the visions of this book? Or will risen martyrs and common men be mixed together in this kingdom, and live in the same manner? If none are to remain on earth but saints raised from the dead, especially if a general conflagration is to precede this resurrection as some have fancied, from whence will the wicked armies of Gog and Magog spring, who, after this period, are to be deceived by Satan again let loose, and to encompass the camp of the saints with intention to destroy them? And how can they think of destroying saints who have been raised from the dead?

From all this confusion of thought we shall be entirely freed if we take this resurrection of the martyrs

tyrs figuratively ; and we shall be led to just conceptions of the universal kingdom of Christ among men. They will be raised from the dead as Elias was when the Savior was born. John the baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and thus the prophecy of Malachi was fulfilled. The resurrection of the witnesses in the 11th chapter is figurative, meaning that others shall rise up of the same spirit. Thus the present vision shews, that the same spirit of christianity which the martyrs manifested will be revived, spread through the world, and appear in all Christ's numerous subjects. They will heartily receive and obey the gospel, constantly persevere in the way of truth and righteousness, and enjoy all the privileges and blessings of Christ's kingdom.

This kingdom of Christ which is to continue a thousand years is the same which is mentioned in the 15th verse of the 11th chapter of this book ; and which was revealed to Daniel as following upon the destruction of the power of the little horn, or Antichrist ; of which it is said, " * The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High ; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." The period of a thousand years assigned for the kingdom of Christ must either be taken strictly for this determinate number of common years, or in a general sense for a very long time, because if reckoned as in other prophecies of this book, taking a day for a year, it would exceed all

* Dan. vii. 27.

all proportions of time in the course of common providence.

From the interpretation of this vision thus far it appears, that the opinion which many have entertained of the millennium, that Christ will personally appear and reign as a king on earth, and that all mankind will be true saints, or that the earth will be renewed and turned into a paradise, and all the dead saints raised to reign with him, rests upon the basis of mere fancy. A warm imagination may create new worlds out of nothing. Fondness for this earth may incline men to bring heaven down to this inferior globe. The Jews construed their prophets in the same manner, and expected a Messiah like one of the princes of this world, who should exalt their nation, and give them all wordly dignities and emoluments : And therefore they were totally blinded when the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah was introduced.

But this vision gives grounds to conclude, that the church of Christ, after all the opposition it has met with from Jews, heathen, and hypocritical christian apostates, as soon as the antichristian empire is destroyed, will universally prevail in the world, and enjoy a remarkable state of purity, peace, and prosperity, secure from all the persecuting rage of the devil ; but that it will consist of believers still in the present imperfect state of human nature, subjected to the infirmities of these mortal bodies, and liable to the common temptations of men in the flesh. We may expect an universal propagation of the gospel, attended with powerful effects on the minds of men, perhaps surpassing what was consequent on the preaching of the apostles, and sufficiently

ciently corresponding to the strong figures by which it is described in the prophecies both of the Old and New Testament ; but not a kind of middle state between heavenly and earthly happiness. And in order to such an universal diffusion of the knowledge of the gospel among the inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth, and those involved in the greatest ignorance and barbarity, notwithstanding that almost insuperable obstruction occasioned by the great diversity of languages, it is not contradictory to reason or the sacred scriptures to suppose, with the pious archbishop Tillotson*, that miracles may again be wrought as in the days of the apostles ; especially that the gifts of tongues and healing may again be bestowed on faithful evangelists : For they seem to be equally necessary for this last propagation of the gospel among the heathen nations as they were at the beginning of christianity †.

Upon this view of the resurrection of the martyrs, who are to reign with Christ a thousand years, which is called the first resurrection, this reflection is subjoined, “ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : On such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of

* Tillotson. Serm. Fol. Vol. 2. Serm. 139 and 143.

† If nations already favored with the light of the gospel should expect miracles as the cure of their infidelity ; our Lord’s severe reply to the Jews, when they demanded some farther sign from heaven after the many evidences of his character which had been given, may be also in this case sufficient to check such an expectation. Modern professors have more reason to fear lest the kingdom of God should be taken from them, and given to nations who will bring forth the fruits of it, than to depend on any peculiar regard when the gospel is glorified in its course through the rest of the world.

of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." This expresseth the happiness of the true successors of the martyrs, or such as shall heartily receive and obey the gospel when it spreads through the world: They will be like priests, holy, consecrated to the service of God and Jesus Christ his son, delighting to offer spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise continually; and will have the honor of doing their part to promote Christ's kingdom on earth, and be partakers of all the privileges and blessings of it through that long period of the church's prosperity. True christians are called by St. Peter "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ—a royal priesthood, an holy nation." And in the 5th chapter of this book the elders of the church say in their new song, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth;" which expresseth their joy in the prospect of Christ's universal empire in the world, and assurance that the saints will then enjoy great happiness under his protection, and in spiritual worship and holy obedience. But the pronouncement of this blessing upon such as shall have a part among Christ's subjects in his kingdom, carries in it an implication, that there will be some in that happy period who will not have a part with the saints, but remain destitute of the spirit of the gospel.

But after the expiration of a thousand years, we are informed that "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: The number

ber of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city : And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." The success which Satan will have in this new trial upon all nations in the four quarters of the world is represented in a surprising view. He will deceive and bring them under his command so effectually that an army, innumerable as the sand of the sea, will be collected together to make war upon the saints and extirpate them from the earth. Here according to the propriety of figures it is evident that *nations* will remain on earth, as at present, during the millennium, which will afterward be deceived by Satan, and form a powerful junction against true religion and the church. They are called Gog and Magog in allusion to Ezekiel's prophecy of the armies of Gog and Magog, which should come against the church in the latter days, and be destroyed by the immediate hand of God. It is very probable the 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel describe the very same event which is intended in this vision ; and the general meaning of both is, that in the last times multitudes of wicked men will appear openly against Christ's kingdom, like an immense army resolved to overthrow it ; but God will utterly destroy them. Gog and Magog, in the proper sense, were nations of the posterity of Japheth who settled in the northern parts of Asia and Europe, from which an inundation of barbarians came in upon the Roman empire, and broke it into ten kingdoms. But these names are used in this vision in a more general sense, as given to the great army of wicked men composed of all nations

in the four quarters of the world ; and therefore it is needless to make any inquiries concerning particular nations distinguished by these names. Nor is this army, or intended battle, or the camp of the saints, or the holy city to be taken literally : For who can suppose the whole world will be assembled in a warlike manner in one place, or the saints literally encamped, or the holy city besieged. When the nations of the earth are agreed in their enmity against the gospel and the church of Christ, they are like an army prepared for war. The saints separating themselves from the multitude of the wicked may be compared to a distinct encampment of God's people united in his cause. The holy city is the true church of Christ, the city of which Isaiah speaks in the beginning of his 26th chapter ; not the heavenly church described in the following vision as the new Jerusalem descending from God, because that does not appear till the final judgment and the utter perdition of all ungodly men ; but that church on earth erected in the millennium.

The general and most natural signification of this part of the vision is, That the greatest and most universal apostasy, and the most malicious opposition to true religion, will appear after the millennium ; that the wickedness of the world will then proceed to the most provoking height in the sight of God, and the church be in danger of total banishment from the earth, as in the days before the flood ; and that the end of the world will then come, and the wicked be consumed in the universal conflagration. The beast and the false prophet are represented in the preceding chapter as cast into a lake of fire burning with brimstone : And now the devil al-

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so is said to be cast into the same lake of fire and brimstone, where they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. This evidently means that world of torments which divine justice has more especially prepared for the devil and his angels, though it can be applied to the beast, as an empire, only in a figurative sense.

According to the foregoing interpretation of this vision of the millennium and the armies of the wicked which will afterward appear, that inextricable perplexity is avoided in which some are entangled who suppose none but saints will live on earth in the millennium. It is impossible for them to give any tolerable account how the world can be so universally corrupted again after such a state of perfect purity. But if we understand this vision of the millennium only in this easy general sense, That the gospel will be published among all nations, and produce its genuine effects on great multitudes of mankind, so that the church shall appear every where in a peaceable and prosperous state, but yet in the imperfect situation of the present world, it will not be difficult to conceive of a gradual and even universal apostasy of mankind afterwards from truth and righteousness. God has always dealt with man, in communicating the knowledge of his will and the great salvation by Jesus Christ, in a way suited to his rational nature. When he has made an extraordinary revelation, accompanied with the most alarming and convincing attestations, he does not always continue the supernatural circumstances of the evidence, and perpetuate the revelation from one generation to another by new miracles : But God requires men to reflect upon
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what he has revealed and the testimonies he has given, and hand down the truth with the evidences to succeeding generations in the common methods of propagating knowledge. If the greatest miracles imaginable were always continued, and wrought daily before the eyes of all men, they would soon be viewed with the same indifference as men commonly observe the works of nature or the ordinary course of divine Providence. Therefore the marvellous works of God, designed to alarm and reform the world, have been performed only at proper intervals of time, when a new alarm seemed necessary ; and the impressions made by these on the minds of men have been afterwards continued in the ordinary methods of divine government. But the strongest impressions which can be made on the human mind gradually grow weaker by length of time ; one generation cannot communicate them in full strength to another ; and generally after a few centuries the most surprising events are scarcely believed. Before the flood traditional evidence had the greatest advantages by the long lives of Adam and the antediluvians, yet in about fifteen hundred years, within the extent of two lives, mankind had lost the knowledge of their Creator, and all regard to his government, and were become so universally corrupt, that God manifested his justice by destroying them with a deluge. This judgment may well be supposed to have made the deepest impressions on Noah and his sons, who doubtless warned their posterity, by whom the earth was repopled, of the danger of forgetting God and renouncing that worship and obedience due to him : Yet in less than five hundred years the world was going fast into idolatry,

try, and Abraham was called out of his own country to be the father of a nation separated to the honor and service of the one true God. The revelation made to Abraham had a great effect upon his immediate posterity : But in about four hundred years after, when Moses was sent to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, they were very ignorant of the God of their fathers, and it was not without a long series of miracles that they were persuaded to believe and obey him. In four hundred years after this they had again almost lost their religion, and adopted the idolatries of the neighbouring heathen, until David and Solomon raised the church and nation from a low state to the greatest splendor. After the reign of these two famous kings, and indeed in the very time of the latter, the posterity of Abraham began to neglect the law of Moses, and corrupt themselves again with all kinds of idolatry and immorality, until they were given up to captivity ; the ten tribes first and then Judah. The captivity of Judah was about four hundred years after their magnificent temple was built ; and their sufferings, and the signal demonstrations of the power and favor of God in their restoration, had great effect on their minds : They were reformed, and zealously observed the law of Moses. But in five hundred years after this, when the promised Messiah appeared, their religion had degenerated into mere formality and superstition, and they were unacquainted with the true spirit of piety or humanity. Then the gospel came with signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost ; the world was roused to earnest attention, and the gospel was accompanied with great power on the hearts and lives of men : But within

five hundred years after, the very extraordinary impressions at first made by the gospel were so far weakened and lost, that christianity appeared in many respects a very different religion, being mixed with a multitude of errors and superstitions, and perverted into a system of worldly pomp and gain. Antichrist then arose, and the church was lost among worldly professors. Great judgments have been sent on the corrupted church at several periods, but without lasting effect. At length the remarkable reformation from popery by the preaching of Luther and Calvin took place, and the primitive gospel and spirit of christianity were revived. Three hundred years are not completed since that reformation gave a general alarm, yet we find the impressions of religion on the minds of protestants become very weak, and not likely to be revived untill God again does some wonderful work in the world.

According to the foregoing review of mankind it appears, that the duration of the most powerful impressions which can be made on human minds, when communicated in the ordinary way from one generation to another, is about four or five hundred years. Therefore there is reason to suppose, that when the last and most marvellous work of God shall be accomplished in the total destruction of Antichrist and his empire, and the subjection of all nations to Christ by the wonderful prevalence of the gospel ; which will make the most extraordinary impressions on the minds of men, and continue a long time, even a thousand years, having the greatest advantage of perpetuation by the modern art of printing ; even these most wonderful impressions, by
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which it will seem as if the whole world were become saints, will by degrees abate, until at length mankind have again lost all regard to religion, and rise up against truth and righteousness to banish them out of the world. This is perfectly agreeable to the representation of the state of the world just before the end of all things, which our Savior gives in that interrogation, “ * When the son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth ?” And in his comparison of the last days with the days before the flood, “ But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be†.” Thus we see the great wickedness of the world after the millennium.

SCENE II.—CHAP. XX. 11—15.

A Representation of the general Judgment.

AFTER a view of the armies of Gog and Magog united to destroy the church, or the great multitudes of wicked men rising up in opposition to the gospel in the last days, and their utter destruction ; St. John beholds the solemnity and terrors of that great day which burns up all the

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* Luke xviii, 8.

† Matt. xxiv. 36—39.

wicked together. He "saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."

The thrones of kings are erected for an open display of their majesty and authority. Therefore when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to judge the world at the last day, he will appear as a glorious king, with ensigns of divine majesty and power, seated on a glorious throne, in the view of the whole world, as the sovereign of life and death. This may be literally true; for Christ himself says,—“Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*.” And again, “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory†.” He was taken up to heaven in a cloud after his resurrection; and the angels which then stood by assured the disciples, who saw him ascend, “that he should come again in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven.” St. Paul likewise says, “‡ We which are alive and remain, shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” But if all this should not be literally verified, yet the figures express a most glorious magnificent appearance above description in the language of men. The throne appeared to St. John a great throne, to shew it to be far superior to the thrones of earthly kings, proper for the view of the universe, and proportioned to the dignity of the true and only representative of the eternal God seated upon it. Probably it appeared arched like
a rainbow

* Matt. xxiv. 30.

† Matt. xxv. 31.

‡ 1 Thess. iv. 17.

a rainbow from one part of heaven to the other. But instead of reflecting the various colors of the natural rainbow it was all white, like the purest light, to signify that it is a throne of perfect justice, by which the rectitude of the divine nature and government will be gloriously manifested in distributing both rewards and punishments. He who appears seated on the throne is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the gospel assures us God will judge the world. And that our conceptions of the glory and power of his coming may be raised to the utmost strength of the mind, and to convince us that at his coming will be the end of the world, this vision shews "earth and heaven fleeing away before the face of the enthroned Judge, and wholly disappearing, so that no more place is found for them." This is agreeable to the language of the Psalmist, " * Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the work of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure : Yea all of them shall wax old like a garment ; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed : But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." St. Peter speaks of the dissolution of the universe at Christ's second coming—" † The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming

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* Psal. cii. 25—27.

† 2 Pet. iii. 10—13.

of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness."—In this language of St. Peter there is a great agreement with the representation in this vision.

Moreover, the resurrection of all the dead is here presented to view. St. John "saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : And another book was opened, which is the book of life : And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works." As books of accounts are produced among men in evidence of debts contracted or balance due ; or as books of law are brought in human judicatories, when criminals are upon trial, to ascertain the crimes and the penalty ; so by this representation of books open before the great Judge of all the earth, it is intimated, that the glorious Judge on the throne will proceed with as unerring knowledge, and perfect equity and truth, as if all the actions of men, and their most minute circumstances, were written in proper books before him ; that in his infinite mind all the actions, and even the most secret thoughts of men, stand indelibly recorded ; and that the sentence of every man shall be strictly agreeable to the statutes of heaven which have been published in the holy scriptures. The particular book called the Book of Life seems to have more especial reference to the gospel of Christ, which contains the great promise of eternal life to sincere penitents who accept the mercy of God offered freely through the Mediator. By this
book

book sinners, who must otherwise be sentenced to destruction, may have a title to life everlasting; and the characters of all who have a claim to life according to the promises of divine grace are plainly described, so that none but those on whom these characters are found will be acquitted and enter into the heavenly happiness.

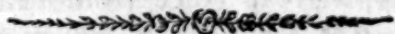
And farther, to shew that the judgment will extend to all men that have ever lived in the world, in this vision “the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and Death, and Hades,” *i. e.* the world of separate spirits, “delivered up the dead which were in them: And they were judged every man according to their works.” All who had been buried in the seas as well as in graves appeared to be raised again; death could no longer hold their dead bodies under its power, but their separate spirits were recalled and reanimated their bodies: So that every descendant from Adam, small and great, without exception, were placed before the solemn tribunal to be judged and receive their final sentence. It is repeated as a circumstance worthy of particular notice, that all were judged “according to their works:” For the judgment of the great day will not proceed merely upon the intuitive knowledge of the glorious Judge, but on the evidence of plain facts. The different works of men will be produced, in that important trial, in proof of their real characters. The wicked will be condemned for their evil practices, as proofs of their disobedient temper and habit of mind. And the good works of the righteous will be brought in evidence of their faith, love, and every gracious principle in their hearts. Jesus Christ himself in describing the process of the general

judgment, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, enumerates the works of love which the righteous had done to him in his poor members ; and on the other hand, the notorious neglect of all the duties of charity and compassion with which the wicked were chargeable ; for which with other crimes they are condemned to go away into everlasting punishment, when the righteous enter into life eternal.

The conclusion of the vision is, that " Death and hell, or Hades, were cast into the lake of fire ;" which is declared to be " the *second death*. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." The representation of *Death* and *Hades* as cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death, most naturally signifies, that the reign of natural death is at an end, and that the souls of men shall no more exist in a state of separation from their bodies ; but that it ends in another and more dreadful kind of death, with great propriety called the second death, viz. that misery and destruction implied in being cast into a lake of fire, which will be the doom of all wicked men. For, in the vision, all who were not found to have a claim to life according to the description of Christ's people in the written gospel, appeared to be cast into the lake of fire. In this same manner Jesus Christ concludes his representation of the general judgment in the 25th of Matthew, " These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

The design of this vision is to give the utmost impressive force to the plain doctrine of the future judgment revealed by the preaching of Christ and his apostles. It is here painted in strong but true colors,

colors, and the reality will appear at God's appointed time. Professors of christianity therefore are hereby admonished to give diligence that they may be found of the great Judge in peace, having the characters by which his people are described in the gospel, the book of life; that so they may escape the second death, and obtain an entrance into his everlasting kingdom.



S C E N E III.—C H A P. XXI. 1—8.

A total Change made in the System of the Universe by the Creation of a new Heaven and a new Earth, the former being dissolved and passed away: And a glorious City comes down from God.

IN the preceding vision of the general judgment the earth and heaven fled away before the face of the Judge on the throne: But now a new heaven appears, and a new earth remarkably different from the former, as having no sea belonging to it. This may be designed to intimate that this new creation is not to be understood literally, but figuratively, as signifying in general that God will prepare a more glorious and happy world for his church after the dissolution of the present system, free from all tumults of the elements or the people.

In this new world St. John saw a city, completely built, beautiful and magnificent beyond conception, which seemed to be descending from God out of heaven. It appeared to be dressed out in the utmost splendor, like a bride clothed in the richest ornaments

ornaments to receive her husband. This city represents in one view both the true church of Christ in the perfection of holiness, and the happy state of it in heaven, which is the new creation. It is called the holy city, and the New Jerusalem, to signify that it is the truth of what was typified by the ancient city Jerusalem, where God manifested his presence by a visible glory in the temple.

Accordingly, a great voice from heaven makes proclamation, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men! and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: For the former things are passed away." To confirm this proclamation, "He that sat upon the throne," *i. e.* the glorious Judge, who appeared on his throne in the former vision, and who produced this new creation when the former passed away at his presence, spake and said, "Behold, I make all things new." And St. John was commanded to write what he saw and heard, because all these things were "true and faithful," and would certainly be verified in due time.

Farther to encourage the faith and patience of sincere christians, while they are waiting on earth for this future consummate happiness, he that sat on the throne said to St. John, "It is done"—*i. e.* The whole plan of divine Providence which was in execution during the former state of things is now completed by the introduction of this new creation, and shall surely be accomplished in a way answerable to the present vision. "I am Alpha and Omega,

ga, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." By this character of Alpha and Omega we are assured, that this is the same divine Person who appeared in the beginning of these visions, and encouraged the churches to continue faithful, overcome all opposition, and persevere in well doing to the end, by a promise of final rewards according to their works, in the full enjoyment of life, and possession of all things which the soul of man can desire. And now the Judge declares that the time is come, when all who have fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith, shall be amply recompensed in a world where all their labors and sufferings shall be at an end, and they shall enjoy the honor and perfect felicity to which the sons of God shall be advanced in the heavenly state. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things: And I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

That this vision of the holy city, and all that follows, is not designed as a description of the happy state of the church during the millennium, is sufficiently evident from this consideration, that the millennium is previous to the armies of Gog and Magog, that these armies of wicked men are destroyed by the arrival of the great day of judgment, and that this new creation succeeds to that old world which flees away before the face of the Judge.

The figures used in this vision of the new heaven, and the new earth, and the holy city, are taken from several prophecies of the Old Testament, which refer to seasons of the church's prosperity in this world, but ultimately and principally to the future perfect state of happiness here described. The

language

language of Isaiah, in the 65th chapter, remarkably agrees with the present vision, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: For behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: And the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying."—These figures in a more qualified sense are applicable to the new state of the church under the gospel, and to its prosperity in the millennium, but will not be fully verified until it arrives at the heavenly perfection which is here represented to St. John. This vision also has particular reference to the 66th chapter of Isaiah, where he says, "As the new heaven and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.—And they shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me. For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh." This prophecy well agrees with the introduction of the heavenly state after the destruction of the armies of Gog and Magog, and indeed seems to have the perfect state of the church in the future world principally in view. Agreeably to this language of the prophets St. Peter says, "Nevertheless, we, according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness." And St. Paul says of the ancient patriarchs, "They looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and

and maker is God"—and speaks of heaven as the "Jerusalem which is above."

As the happiness of heaven is above all human ideas, we have no other way to form any conceptions of it but by comparisons with present things. Therefore it is here represented as a most glorious city built by God himself and descending from heaven; and the happiness to be enjoyed is described by freedom from all the troubles, pains, and sorrows of the present life, and from death the great terror of mankind, and by the enjoyment of all things.

But several characters are enumerated which will be excluded from the happiness of the holy city, and "have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." As there is a new world created for the perfected saints, so there is a world of misery which will be the dreadful portion of the wicked. As heaven can be described only in earthly metaphors conveying every delightful idea; so the world of punishment which will be the portion of the wicked is called the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. This is death in the most dreadful sense, the second death. Instead of attempting vainly to refine upon the awful ideas suggested by these metaphors, we ought to rest our faith entirely on what God has been pleased to reveal in his own terms; for after all our reasonings we can know no more. They who are to have their part in the lake of fire, are, *the fearful*, who have not courage to profess and practice the truth in opposition to the censures and persecutions of the world; the *unbelieving*, who reject all the evidences by which the gospel is confirmed,

firmed, and pay no proper regard to divine threatenings or promises ; the *abominable*, who practise those gross impieties and immoralities which God has declared to be abominable in his sight ; *murderers*, whose hearts are hardened against all the principles of humanity, who indulge revenge without restraint, and stain their hands with the blood of the innocent ; *whoremongers*, who are devoted to the lusts of uncleanness, and break through all the laws of purity and chastity ; *forcerers*, who literally practise magical arts and promote the worship of the devil, or figuratively bewitch men, and delude them into error, superstition, and wickedness ; *idolaters*, who pretend to worship God, and yet depart from the worship required in his word, follow their own imaginations, bow down to images, worship the creature more than the Creator, or set up idols in their hearts ; and finally *all liars*, who have no regard to truth in words or actions, but love to deceive and to be deceived, and are authors of error and falsehood in religion, and always appear in opposition to the word and ways of God. These characters are designed to comprehend all wicked men, both such as commit the most open and gross sins, and such as are under the government of evil principles and passions though their vices are more concealed. All such will have their part in the burning lake, and suffer the second death.

SCENE

S C E N E IV.—C H A P. XXI. 9—27.

A particular Description of the glorious City New Jerusalem,
or the heavenly State.

AFTER the more distant and general view of the New Jerusalem, which seemed to be high in the upper regions, just coming down from heaven, one of those seven angels who had the commission to pour out the seven vials of the wrath of God, came and talked with St. John, saying, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Immediately he was transported "to a great and high mountain," where the angel shewed him that great city which was coming down from God. He had now a near and distinct view of it, and his eye was struck with its amazing splendor. For the divine glory encompassed it all around with a lustre far exceeding the ancient symbol of the divine presence in the tabernacle : It shined with a dazzling brightness like that which is reflected from the most brilliant diamond, or like the charming green of the jasper intermingled with the purest crystalline glitter.

Ezekiel had a vision of the city of God, which we have from the fortieth chapter of his prophecy. His view also was from a very high mountain. He saw it exactly measured, and describes its dimensions. But though there are some things in that vision which coincide with this of the apostle John, and shew that it ultimately points out the same heavenly church ; yet it falls very far short of this vision in the sublimity of the figures, and is more especially

especially accommodated to that state of the church in the present world, when it received additional glory and perfection by the gospel.

This resplendent city was encompassed with a great and high wall : Which signifies the perfect security of all the blessed inhabitants from every enemy and annoyance, being guarded on every side by almighty power, and enjoying uninterrupted peace and happiness. In the wall were twelve gates ; three in each of the four sides : For the city was a square, situated so as to face the four cardinal points of the world. The gates had names inscribed on them, which were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Perhaps by having three gates open towards each quarter of the world, there may be an intimation of the free admission of persons of all nations, who have believed and obeyed the gospel, into that heavenly city, and that this mercy is freely offered to all men. At each gate an angel stood as a porter, to see that no unqualified person might be admitted, but that all worthy citizens might have an entrance abundantly open. This intimates that however hypocrites may intrude into the church on earth, where only weak and fallible men are employed to guard the entrance, the angels will perform their orders from Jesus Christ at the last day, so that none will gain an admission into the heavenly city but such as are approved of him. The foundation of the wall of the city, being divided into twelve parts, was inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles. By this we are reminded of those words of St. Paul—" * Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but

* Eph. ii. 19—22,

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but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord : In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit.”—

Here the church is compared to citizens endowed with great privileges in a happy city ; and to a temple composed of the whole number of saints united together as the stones of a magnificent building, erected for the honor of God upon the apostolic doctrines as a firm foundation, having Jesus Christ himself for the chief corner stone. The New Jerusalem therefore is plainly the same church of which the apostle there speaks, appearing in this vision in the perfection of beauty in a new world.

But that St. John might be more fully acquainted with the perfect symmetry of this city, the angel had a golden measuring rod in his hand, with which he measured the city, the gates, and the wall ; and by this the city appeared to be not only grand, but built in the most accurate proportions, according to the perfect rules of the word of God. It was found to be an exact square, and of vast extent, for it measured 12000 furlongs, which make 1500 miles. This may be understood either of the whole circuit of the walls, and then each side will be 375 miles ; or as the measure of each side of the square, and so the city is described as 1500 miles square. The latter is indeed a surprising extent : But if we consider this as a description of the heavenly church and world, there can be no excess in the boldest figures, and most amazing dimensions. The citi-

zens of heaven, however thinly scattered while on this earth at any one time, will appear, when gathered into one society in the New Jerusalem, to be an innumerable company ; and large room is prepared for all the saints that have been since the beginning of the world, and which shall hereafter believe and obey the gospel unto the end of all things. The more surprising the dimensions are, so much more plainly we may see that we are not to look for such a city on this globe but in another world. It is farther said, that " the length, and the breadth, and height of it are equal."—This does not mean that the height was equal to the measure of the length and breadth, which would make the city a complete cube, but that the height of the walls and buildings was in every part equal, as there was a perfect equality as to the length and breadth ; for the measure next mentioned is plainly designed for the height of the wall. " He measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." If we should take the city to be a cube, and consider this last measure as expressing the thickness of the wall, it would fall very short of a due proportion to the height of 12000, or of 3000 furlongs. Therefore this must be the measure of the height of the wall ; 144 cubits, according to the measure in common use among men, will make about seventy seven yards and an half yard. Here it is observable that the number twelve is very frequently used in these visions as a sacred radical number, with reference to the twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles, and as very significant of the church of God. The number of God's sealed people is 144,000, which is
twelve

twelve times twelve thousand. The same number is repeated in the fourteenth chapter to express the whole company of saints. And here the city has twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates ; the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are inscribed on the gates ; the measure of the city is 12,000 furlongs ; and the height of the wall is 144 cubits, the square of twelve ; and the wall has twelve precious stones for foundations, like those in the breastplate of the high priests under the law of Moses. All this is an emblematical representation of the excellency and perfection of the doctrines of the apostles on which the church is built ; as also of the consummate glory and felicity of the heavenly church in the full view of the divine perfections, and the everlasting favor and protection of the Almighty : Which is farther represented by the riches with which the city was in other respects adorned. For the wall was built not of common materials, but of jasper, a precious stone of a beautiful green clouded with white ; and the city itself, and all its buildings and ornaments, were of pure gold set in crystal, shining with unparallelled lustre and beauty ; and the great street or public square, was as it were paved with gold and crystal, appearing gloriously transparent.

It was peculiarly observable that no particular temple was seen in this city, because the presence of the Lord God Almighty, and of the Lamb, was visible every where in it : The whole city therefore was like one capacious and magnificent temple, peculiarly intended for the residence of the divine Majesty. This city had no need of the sun, or of the moon to enlighten it, for the glory of God and

the Lamb shone there with uninterrupted light, far superior to all created splendor.

The inhabitants of this city consisted of all who are saved from among all nations of the earth ; and they perpetually enjoy this divine light, and live forever completely happy. The riches of it were immense, exceeding all description, as if all the kings of the earth had agreed to bring into it all their wealth, glory, and magnificence. Nor was the usual precaution, of shutting the gates of a fortified city at night, needful there, for the city enjoyed perpetual day, and was perfectly secure from all enemies and alarms.

But though the gates of this city were always open, yet none could by any means gain an entrance there who were profane or morally polluted. It is said, " There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." As all who were under any ceremonial pollution were excluded from the jewish temple, so every person that is found defiled with moral pollutions shall more effectually be kept out of this heavenly city and temple. All those vicious characters before particularly mentioned ; all that are guilty of secret or open abominations ; all that love falsehood and deceit, and propagate lies instead of the pure doctrines of Christ, making worldly gain by promoting false religion ; in short all such as have not the characters by which the people of God are described in the gospel which is the Lamb's book of life, shall be forever excluded from this glorious heavenly city.

Thus

Thus that state of consummate felicity into which the church of Christ will be received at the end of the world, is described in the most exalted metaphors which the grandest materials in nature can furnish, or human language reach. It rises high above every thing that the eye of man hath seen, or the boldest imagination conceived. The descriptive pens of the most celebrated writers, whether ancient or modern, never drew so glorious a picture as is here copied from the heavenly model.

SCENE V.—CHAP. XXII.

A Paradise appears in the Midst of the New Jerusalem, described in Figures taken from the primitive earthly Paradise. A farther Attestation to the Truth of these Prophecies, and a Warning against any Man's adding to or diminishing from the Words of this Book.

THE angel now shews St. John a Paradise in the midst of this glorious city of God, bearing some resemblance to the garden of Eden, which was prepared for the delightful abode of the first parents of mankind in their state of innocence, but infinitely exceeding that earthly paradise in pleasures and blessings. That had a large river running through it, divided into four branches, to add to the delightfulness of the place, and water and fertilize the ground. And so Ezekiel, in his vision of the new city and temple, saw waters issuing from the threshold of the temple eastward, and increasing in their course, until they became an impassable river, which gave life to every thing wherever it came. But in this New Jerusalem, "there appeared a pure river of water

of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." This signifies that perpetual life which flows from God the eternal fountain, and is communicated to all the blessed inhabitants of heaven. Agreeably to this idea David speaks in the 36th Psalm—"How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: In thy light shall we see light." It is a most agreeable addition to the beauty and delight of a magnificent city, crowded with inhabitants, to have a river running through the midst of it, bordered on each side with trees yielding all the varieties of pleasant fruits, where the eye may be entertained, and the heart regaled with fresh pleasures. And in hot countries, when men are weary and faint with travelling, they receive new life when they can sit down on the bank of a pleasant river, and enjoy the shade, the cooling breeze, and reviving draughts of pure water. Therefore this is represented as one of the peculiar ornaments and delights of the New Jerusalem, that a river, springing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, runs through it, and communicates life from the Eternal Fountain to all the blessed inhabitants. Christ has purchased life for his people, and is empowered to bestow it; and because he lives they shall live also in the enjoyment of perpetual felicity with him.

This river of life is represented as running through the main street of the city, bordered with trees on each side of it; all of the most excellent kind, planted not only for ornament, but for the incomparable

ble qualities both of the fruit and the leaves. These are called the tree of life, in allusion to that which God planted in the garden of Eden, of which if Adam had eaten he would have lived forever. In that earthly paradise was only one tree of life ; but here in this heavenly paradise the whole street, through the midst of the city, is embowered with those of a more excellent kind. They bear twelve manner of fruits, *i. e.* all manner of delightful fruits which are adapted to the taste of heavenly souls. They yield their fruits every month, so that none of the inhabitants can ever be disappointed of the full gratification of their desires. And the fruits render every one immortal that partake of them ; and even the leaves are an effectual security against all diseases and infirmities which human nature suffers in the present world, so that none of the happy inhabitants shall say, " I am sick."—For all sin is forever taken away, as Isaiah speaks of this same heavenly city, in chapter 33, verse 24.

Into the earthly paradise a curse entered. There was a tree the fruit of which was forbidden, and by tasting it the first man brought on himself and descendants a dreadful curse. But in this heavenly paradise there shall be no more curse, nothing which will expose the favoured inhabitants to a forfeiture of the least degree of their happiness. They shall never be driven from the presence of God, but continue in the enjoyment of perfect felicity with him ; for the throne of God is fixed in this happy city, and all the citizens will continually be employed in his service, and have the open view of his glory ; they will see his face, and like priests unto God, his name will be written on their foreheads. As *Holiness to the Lord* was written on the

forehead of the high priest under the law of Moses, so all that live in this paradise shall have the characters of holiness visible upon them, and it will be manifest that they are true subjects of the King of heaven, confirmed in their allegiance and all the blessings resulting from it.

In the present system of nature, the light of the sun must give way to the alternate darkness of night, and men need the auxiliary light of a candle to remedy the inconveniences which must otherwise be suffered when the sun is withdrawn. So likewise prosperity and adversity, in the present world, are set one over against the other, and the comforts of this life are alloyed with mixtures of sorrow and affliction, which are figuratively expressed in the scriptures by darkness. But in the heavenly paradise will be uninterrupted day : There will be no need of such an amazing globe of light as the natural sun, much less of the glimmering light of a candle ; for the light there enjoyed comes immediately from the first immense source of light and life ; and in the presence of God is fulness of joys without the least interchange of sorrow. And all who dwell in that happy world reign as kings in the highest honor and felicity for ever and ever.

The description of the heavenly paradise being finished, the angel affirms that "these sayings are faithful and true." This refers not only to the description of the heavenly city and paradise, but to all the prophecies of this book. We are assured there is no mistake or misrepresentation of any of these things, but every part of the information given in this book may be depended upon, as coming from God. For "the Lord God of the holy prophets

ets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." The same Jehovah, the living and true God, from whom all the former prophets received the revelations delivered to the church, sent his angel to make known to St. John, and by him to all God's faithful servants through succeeding ages, those great events which must shortly be accomplished. Christ then gives warning of his coming—"Behold I come quickly;"—this comprehends both his coming in the course of Providence, to fulfil all which is declared as to the events relating to the world and the church, for these things were shortly to come to pass; and his coming to the final judgment. And a blessing is pronounced upon all who observe what is said in the prophecies of this book, and govern their conduct accordingly. The Revelation is introduced with the same blessing—"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: For the time is at hand." If these prophecies related to far distant times, so very remote that the human mind could scarcely realize the idea of these events, however grand, it might be natural to pay less regard to them: But Christ declares they will quickly begin, and that they will go on and be performed in proper order, until all things are accomplished which are preparatory to the final and most glorious state of his kingdom. And considering the variety of remarkable Providences which must first take place, the last judgment will come quickly, as soon as all these events can be accomplished. They who will not attend to these prophecies, and observe the admonitions and encouragements here given; are liable

ble to be involved in the punishments to be inflicted on Christ's enemies : Whereas they who give due attention to this Revelation, will be guarded against all temptations to apostatize from the faith, and against all prevailing corruptions of the church, and comforted under the greatest persecutions and afflictions by the faithful promises of their Lord.

After this testimony of the angel, St. John adds his own—" I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things." St. John had the most infallible evidence of the truth of all which he has written. He as plainly saw the things represented in these visions as men commonly see objects with their natural eyes ; and as distinctly heard all that was spoken as sounds can be conveyed to the natural ear ; and so had no doubt of the reality of this revelation from God. Observing the angel who stood by him, and not knowing but that it was Jesus Christ himself who appeared to him at the beginning, he prostrated himself at his feet to pay him divine worship : But the angel prevented him in the same manner as we find in the 19th chapter ; charging him to refrain from all worship paid to a creature—" See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book. Worship God." The angel was but a servant of God, as all the prophets and saints on earth are, a messenger sent on this special errand ; and in this respect had no claim to religious worship more than any of the prophets or apostles, or any faithful christians who receive the doctrines and obey the commands

commands of Christ. Religious worship is to be paid to God alone, and ought to be directed to him who is the Author of all Revelation, and to whom angels and men are servants.

This angel then charges him "not to seal the sayings of this prophecy, because the time was at hand." The revelation was of great importance to the church, and it was necessary to publish it, that it might be open to the view of all, and that christians might be led into the meaning of these things more and more as the times of their accomplishment draw near.

The angel goes on, as a messenger sent from Christ to speak in his name, and says, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : And he that is filthy, let him be filthy still : And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still : And he that is holy, let him be holy still." This is an intimation that these prophecies will be little regarded by men resolved to go on in the way of their own hearts. Though these warnings of the apostasy and corruption of the christian church are in general sufficiently plain, and might deter all who hear them from joining on the side of Christ's enemies, yet many will disregard them as wrapt up in too great obscurity to deserve notice, and be permitted to go on in blindness and wickedness, opposing the gospel, and persecuting the saints. Therefore if men are determined to be unjust, they are left to be unjust still : If they are filthy, they must have their own inclination, and be filthy still. If men will not regard this revelation and the many admonitions of sacred scripture, they must be left to themselves, to take their own way ; there is no hope of reclaiming them.

them. Let them go on, until the judgments of God are executed upon them : Let them persist in the practice of idolatry and all manner of filthiness and abominations ; they shall have no farther admonitions than what are written in this book, and their final destruction must be charged upon themselves. But the things here revealed will answer the great design of confirming the righteous, comforting them under their various trials, and encouraging their obedience to the gospel.

For the farther confirmation of the prophecies of this book, and as a most solemn conclusion of the whole, the Lord Jesus Christ again speaks of himself under the same characters as when he appeared to St. John in the beginning of these visions—" I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." And he encourages his people to do his commandments by an assurance that he will come quickly in the course of Providence, and bring his reward with him, to recompense his faithful servants for all their labors and sufferings, and to punish those who have disobeyed the gospel, and persecuted his saints ; and will prepare all things for the final judgment. He claims the characters of God, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the everlasting God, the creator of all things. He has the government of all creatures in his hands, is able to accomplish whatever he has foretold, and will direct all events to the end of the world for the advancement of his own honor. Therefore his church may depend on his wisdom, power, and faithfulness, in the lowest and most afflicted circumstances. Though once he appeared in the weakness of human nature, and was crucified

crucified by the hands of wicked men, yet he lives forever, and has the power of life and death in his hands.

The characters of such as have a right to enter into the heavenly paradise, and of such who shall be excluded from it, are repeated ; because it is a matter of infinite concern to every person. They, and they only, who do his commandments shall be admitted into the heavenly city, and have right to the tree of life ; and these are unspeakably blessed, and shall be welcomed with that rapturous song in full chorus of the church, “ Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation, which keepeth the truth, may enter in*.” But on the other hand, they who shall be kept out are *dogs*, who tear and devour Christ’s sheep, having tempers opposite to the spirit and character of God’s people ; *forcerers*, who by various bewitching arts entice men away from the gospel ; *whoremongers*, who indulge themselves in fleshly lusts, and by the impurity of their hearts are led into all impure practices ; *murderers*, in whom hatred, malice, and cruelty reign, especially who persecute and murder the servants of God ; *idolaters*, who have mixed the pure worship of God with idolatries similar to those of the heathen, or who in their hearts love the world and the things of it more than the Creator ; and finally, every other vicious character is summed up in this general description, *whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, i. e.* every one that takes pleasure in falsehood rather than truth, who loves to be deceived and deceives others, and has no regard to what is true and right in practice, but rejects the religion of the gospel, and practises every art of deceit and injustice. All such characters,

* Isaiah xxvi. 1, 2.

ters, whether they appear in the highest enormity or in a more covert manner, whether they meet in the same man or are more separately observed, will forever be shut out from that New Jerusalem and heavenly paradise prepared for the righteous.

That this book may be received with the utmost reverence, the Lord Jesus Christ declares it to be a Revelation made by him to the churches.—“ I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” These visions were not the workings of a disordered mind, but were presented to the view of the apostle John by an angel sent from Christ to communicate these things in the most evident manner, for the benefit of the churches to the end of the world, as a standing testimony of Christ’s perfect knowledge of all things, and gracious care of his people ; that their faith may be confirmed, and that they may be comforted under all their troubles. Christ assures us that he is the same person of whom the prophets spake in ancient times as the son of David, and the root of Jesse, which should spring up out of a dry ground, and stand for an ensign of the people. He was David’s Lord, and the author of all his honor : And he was also his offspring, because his human nature was derived in a line from him. He is that star of which Balaam prophesied ; that morning star which introduced the bright day of the gospel ; that star which directs the church through the darkness of the present state to the regions of everlasting light. But though his glory is now seen at a great distance, and shines to us only as the morning star, yet,

yet he is a sun to the heavenly world, and appears in the perfect splendor of divine Majesty.

This divine Savior, having revealed to his church all things necessary for the support and encouragement of his people under every trial, and given such a ravishing prospect of the glorious city prepared for them, invites all to come and partake of the joy and felicity of it. "The spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come: And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Holy Spirit, who speaks in every part of the holy scriptures, and fills the hearts of christians with love to God and man; and the bride, the true church of Christ; join in the general invitation to all men, to come and enjoy the blessedness of the heavenly paradise here revealed. And every one who hears these things, and is fully persuaded of them, will add his earnest desire that all would come and receive the promise of this everlasting felicity. So general, so free, is this invitation, that none are excepted who sincerely and earnestly desire the happiness now set before them. Let every one that is athirst, come. Whosoever will, whosoever values this consummate blessedness, and finds such a desire of it as cannot be satisfied without the enjoyment, let him take the water of life freely which flows from the eternal fountain.

Thus the Revelation from Jesus Christ is completed. All necessary warnings and encouragements, all predictions of approaching troubles and remarkable deliverances of the church, and the final issue of all things in an everlasting state of rest and happiness, are contained in this book which finishes the

the canon of sacred scripture. And that no man may presume to deliver any other prophecies besides those contained in this book, or to make the least alteration in the things herein written, an awful curse is denounced against him who shall add to these things or diminish from them. "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book : And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." The threatening is doubled to shew the certainty of the execution, and the dreadfulnes of the curse. Whatever judgments are declared in this book, whether relating to this world or another ; however terrible, distressing, or destructive, they shall be heaped on that man who dares to add any human invention, or the vain fancies of his own mind to this divine prophecy. Or if any man shall dare to curtail the things delivered in this book unto the church, under any pretence whatever, or diminish the credit due to them, he shall have no part among them who are registered in the book of life, or in the blessedness enjoyed in the holy city, or in any of the promises of this book.

And now the last word which our Lord says to the church in this revelation is a repetition of that promise which he had again and again made—"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly ;" *q. d.* "Let my veracity be depended upon with the most unshaken assurance. I will certainly come in a short time and in a sudden man-

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ner to the world. Therefore look for me, and wait patiently for that happiness which I have promised to my servants." To this promise the apostle sub-joins his Amen, expressing his own faith and ardent desire—"Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus." With St. John all true christians are ready to unite in heart and voice, and say, "Come Lord Jesus, fulfil thy promises ; make thy church prosperous ; grant the promised felicity of thy kingdom. Come, and receive thy saints into the holy city, and bring us to the enjoyment of the water of life in the heavenly paradise."

Finally ; the apostle pronounces a benediction, as usual in the conclusion of all the apostolic epistles ; which blessing will come upon all who hearken to the words of Christ, and extends to all believers to the end of the world. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ; the mercy which he has purchased and promised, and the effectual influences of his holy spirit, all the blessings of his love, are granted to and will finally be bestowed upon all sincere christians.

May all that read this Prophecy have a part in the promised blessings therein contained.

A M E N.



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